CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN GERMAN

Hugo von Hofmannsthal

The Theatres of Consciousness

Benjamin Bennett

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This book focuses on Hugo von Hofmannsthal's intense, lifelong concentration upon a single cohesive set of poetic, philosophical and ethical concerns, a quality of his work which has been neglected in the bulk of existing scholarship.

Professor Bennett examines Hofmannsthal's work in the context of literary theory and the history of philosophy, referring especially to Nietzsche, German Idealism and the poetics of German Classicism. He identifies three principal areas of concern to Hofmannsthal: the theory of genre, the question of the role of literature in society, and the search for a fruitful response to the problem of the historical development of culture.

The argument proceeds by way of detailed interpretation of texts, including *Der Tor und der Tod*, the Chandos letter, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Der Schwierige*, *Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater* and *Der Turm*.

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN GERMAN

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Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1914

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Hugo von Hofmannsthal

The theaters of consciousness

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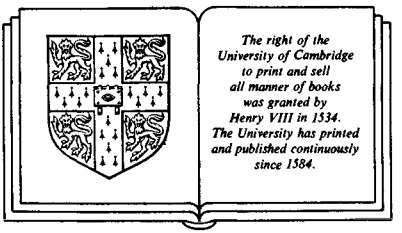

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For H. B.

Meine Frau ganz einfach. Ist das nicht spaßig?

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PREFACE

Richard Exner, in a study that attempts boldly to illuminate Hofmannsthal's whole career by interpreting one short text, feels called upon to say at the outset that he is "not pleading the case for invariability in Hofmannsthal's work. But a development is not the same as a break."[1] This is an important point, simple as it may be. There are frequent developmental crises in Hofmannsthal's career, and times when the poet himself has little idea where he is headed; but his life's work, in the end, is characterized by an extraordinary, if deeply problematic cohesion, which is mainly the result of his own effort to achieve it.

My approach, while not so radical as Exner's, is similar in its proceeding from the interpretation of a relatively small number of texts. I seek thus to present the reader with more or less complete arguments of limited scope, rather than oblige him to keep a large amount of preliminary material in mind while waiting for the conclusion that justifies it. And the reader does not have to agree with all my inferences from the particular to the general in order (I hope) to find something useful in the individual interpretations. In any case, I will not try to treat all of Hofmannsthal. Especially the narrative work will receive less than its share of attention, and I concede that this lack has to do with my conviction that Hofmannsthal's is a fundamentally theatrical imagination. But even if my approach is one-sided, it does not follow that it is invalid. And if I am laughed at, it will at least not be for claiming to have spoken the last word on Hofmannsthal.

I will set out, then, from the interpretation of finished works. Hofmannsthal left behind a great deal of fragmentary material, in notes and drafts and letters, that contains numerous tantalizing hints for the critic; but I will avoid actually basing any interpretive arguments upon such notions as "pre-existence" or "the allomatic."

These notions are useful only so long as the principal line of argument proceeds from the interpretation of a finished work toward the interpretation of the fragment, not vice versa. The scribblings and jottings that start to get published after a writer dies are as a rule so tentative as to be practically an invitation to irresponsible criticism, whereas the finished work generally provides at least a better criterion of validity. Strictly speaking, of course, no work is ever "finished," least of all for Hofmannsthal, in whose later period we shall observe a constant habit of self-rewriting. But still, the more a complex of thought and figure and image has been refined in the crucible of grammatical and artistic form – that is, the closer the text comes to being recognizable as a "work" – the likelier it is to provide a sound basis for interpretation. I will *use* Hofmannsthal's jottings repeatedly, for re-enforcement and amplification; but whenever the fragmentary material actually figures in an argument, I will try to ensure that a prior basis, in interpretation, is present.

I do not want to put undue strain on either myself or the reader by calling my approach a "method" and writing an introduction on it. The text and notes of the early chapters contain a relatively high proportion of methodological material, in my attempts to explain what I am doing *while* doing it. But the concepts of "society" and "culture" will perhaps still be a source of confusion. My own main interest, and my reason for being interested in Hofmannsthal, is the theory of poetry and drama; and when I speak of society or culture I always mean, primarily, society or culture as seen from the perspective of poetic theory. Especially in Parts II and III, I have occasion to deal with specific historical facts; but I do not aim for either system or completeness. I treat the facts that I think matter from a poetic–theoretical perspective; I do not claim to treat Hofmannsthal's work *as* a social or cultural phenomenon.[2]

The structure of the argument as a whole is as simple as I have been able to make it. Part I treats the question of poetic language as a heightening mirror of language in general, and then, by way of the idea of language as action in *Der Tor und der Tod*, moves to the question of drama. My point is that the irreducible given of the dramatic genres, the situation of audience and actors in a theater, here becomes, mirror-wise, an indispensable symbol in the structure of meaning. Parts II and III are the redemption of a promise I made in my *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, to show Hofmannsthal's achievement of both a true neo-comic and a true neo-tragic drama at what I called "maximum saturation," where

"saturation" refers to the extent to which a play's meaning is completed in the performance itself, without presupposing any special conditions outside the theater.[3] Part II ends with a discussion of *Der Schwierige*, especially of the idea that the theater's symbolic function within society is a mirror of society's own symbolic function with respect to human existence metaphysically considered. And in Part III, which closes with *Der Turm*, the supplanting of a relatively abstract idea of society by a thoroughly immediate idea of culture is discussed, and with it the complex of problems that produces both an enormous achievement and an enormous collapse in Hofmannsthal's late work. My main point concerns what Hofmannsthal understood as the two principal dangers, in the abstract, to a worthy communal existence: the danger of social petrifaction and that of cultural fragmentation. Considered structurally (not sociologically or historically), comedy turns out to be the appropriate theatrical response to the first danger, tragedy to the second.

This point, as I say, is a simple one, but in order to be developed it requires a number of theoretical and interpretive detours, some of which I hope will be interesting in their own right. At least the matter they deal with is interesting: Hofmannsthal's theory of poetic language, his manner of reading creatively his own earlier works, his assimilation of Goethe, his struggle with Kleist, his incorporation of idealism and something like Hermetism into an ever unsettled philosophical dynamics, his confrontation with the historical power of Western music and with a special kind of cultural reality at Salzburg. I have tried to distribute this matter so as to provide not only a basis for my own argument, but also as complete and balanced a picture of Hofmannsthal's career as the limits of my interest and competence permit. At age twenty-five Hofmannsthal was already established as "the idolized hope of his generation";[4] but the misunderstanding that came with this early prominence, the confusion of public images, persisted beyond his death, persists to an extent even now, and makes it less easy than it should be to recognize the intensity of his lifelong concentration upon the single cohesive set of poetic, philosophical and ethical concerns that I will try to justify summarizing in the phrase "the theaters of consciousness."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is well over a decade old, and if I attempted to name all the people who have helped me with it by discussion and criticism, the result would be a small autobiography. For the opportunity actually to sit down and write and rewrite the book, however, I am especially grateful to the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Virginia. I am indebted to Gail Moore and her crew for help with the otherwise not always helpful electronic helps in manuscript preparation, to the editors and consultants at Cambridge University Press for a last good measure of criticism, and to my wife for reading several stages of manuscript.

A number of chapters contain revised versions of published articles:

"The Smallest World Theater," MOSAIC, *A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 7/2 (Winter, 1975), 53–66.

"Chandos and his Neighbors," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 49 (1975), 315–31.

"The Role of Vorwitz in Hofmannsthal's *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*," *Symposium*, 29 (1975), 13–29. Reprinted with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Published by Heldref Publications, 4000 Albemarle St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016. Copyright © 1975.

"Idea, Reality and Play-Acting in *Der Tor und der Tod*," *Orbis Litterarum*, 30 (1975), 262–76.

"Hans Karl's Unmysterious Return," *Essays in Literature*, 2 (1975), 230–44.

"Kleist's Puppets in Early Hofmannsthal," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 37 (1976), 151–67.

"Werther and Chandos," *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976), 552–8.

"Hofmannsthal's Return," *Germanic Review*, 51 (1976), 28–40. Reprinted with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational

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"Missed Meetings in Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 12 (1976), 59–64.

"Death and the Fools," *German Life & Letters*, 30 (1976–7), 65–72.

I am grateful to the editors and consultants at these periodicals for their criticisms, and to the publishers for permission to use the material.

Translations are my own. I have tried to translate or paraphrase enough of the textual material to make the argument intelligible in English alone, while at the same time keeping enough of the original to avoid disorienting the reader who knows the texts in German.

ABBREVIATIONS

Editions

W	Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke*, veranstaltet vom Freien Deutschen Hochstift, 37 vols., 13 published as of May 1, 1987 (Frankfurt/Main, 1975–)

Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt/Main, 1947ff.) is cited according to the following abbreviations:

A	*Aufzeichnungen*
D1–4	*Dramen* I–IV
E	*Die Erzählungen*
G	*Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*
L1–4	*Lustspiele* I–IV
P1–4	*Prosa* I–IV

Collections of letters

B1	Hofmannsthal, *Briefe 1890–1901* (Berlin, 1935)
B2	Hofmannsthal, *Briefe 1900–1909* (Wien, 1937)
H/LvA	H./Leopold von Andrian, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Walter H. Perl (Frankfurt/Main, 1968)
H/EKvB	H./Edgar Karg von Bebenburg, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Mary E. Gilbert (Frankfurt/Main, 1966)
H/RB-H	H./Richard Beer-Hofmann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Eugene Weber (Frankfurt/Main, 1972)
H/EvB	H./Eberhard von Bodenhausen, *Briefe der Freundschaft* (Düsseldorf, 1953)
H/RB	H./Rudolf Borchardt, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Marie Luise Borchardt, Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt/Main, 1954)
H/CJB	H./Carl J. Burckhardt, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Carl J. Burckhardt (Frankfurt/Main, 1966)

H/SG	*Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*, 2nd edn (München, Düsseldorf, 1953)
H/HK	H./Harry Graf Kessler, *Briefwechsel 1898–1929*, ed. Hilde Burger (Frankfurt/Main, 1968)
H/HvN	H./Helene von Nostitz, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Oswalt von Nostitz (Frankfurt/Main, 1965)
H/AS	H./Arthur Schnitzler, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Therese Nickl, Heinrich Schnitzler (Frankfurt/Main, 1964)
H/RS	Richard Strauss/H. *Briefwechsel*, ed. Willi Schuh, 3rd edn (Zürich, 1964)
H/AW	H./Anton Wildgans, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Norbert Altenhofer (Heidelberg, 1971)
H/PZ	H./Paul Zifferer, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Hilde Burger (Wien, 1983)

Other abbreviations

AfdA	*Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*
CL	*Comparative Literature*
DVLG	*Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*
GL&L	*German Life and Letters*
GQ	*German Quarterly*
GR	*Germanic Review*
GRM	*Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*
JDSG	*Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*
JFDH	*Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts*
K	Heinrich von Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Helmut Sembdner, 2 vols., 5th edn (München, 1970)
LJ	*Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch: im Auftrage der Görres-Gesellschaft*
LuK	*Literatur und Kritik*
MAL	*Modern Austrian Literature*
MD	*Modern Drama*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
NR	*Neue Rundschau*
PEGS	*Publications of the English Goethe Society*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association*
RG	*Recherches Germaniques*
WA	*Goethes Werke*, "Weimarer Ausgabe," 143 vols. (Weimar, 1887–1918)
WW	*Wirkendes Wort*

Part I

PRINCIPLES OF LYRIC AND DRAMA

I

KLEIST'S PUPPETS

By "principles" of lyric and drama I mean the generic principles that emerge gradually from various texts as young Hofmannsthal struggles to establish in language a firm relation to the private and problematic sphere of self-consciousness. My first point is that Hofmannsthal orients himself in this matter largely with respect to the thought of Heinrich von Kleist, which he finds unacceptable. My focus here is upon Hofmannsthal; I do not claim to present a complete or adequate interpretation of Kleist's puppet-theater speculations.

I

As far as I know, it cannot be demonstrated that Hofmannsthal was aware of Kleist's essay "Über das Marionettentheater" before August 1895; but given the extent of his reading in general, plus a few apparent echoes in his writing, conclusive proof is probably not necessary.[1] It is reasonably clear that by 1895 he not only had read the puppet-theater essay but had developed a strong critical attitude toward it. We read among his notes:

> leben oder sich ausleben nur im Kampf mit den Widerstrebenden Mächten. So lehrt mich mein Pferd den Werth des Vermögens, der Unabhängigkeit. Sehnsucht, Hass, Demüthigung ... sind die Einstellungen des seelischen Augapfels zum Erkennen der eigenen Lage im universellen Coordinatensystem und des Verhältnisses zu den andern Geschöpfen. Vorher geht man in Gedanken leichtfertig mit den Wesen um wie mit Marionetten. (scheinhaftes Leben.)[2] (W29 42; A 127)

> to live, or to live oneself out completely, [is possible] only in the struggle with Opposing Powers. Thus my horse teaches me the value of personal resources, of independence. Yearning, hatred, humiliation serve to situate the mind's eye, so that we recognize our own place in the universal coordinate-system and our relation to other creatures, so that in our thinking we no longer manipulate people and things as if they were marionettes (the life of mere appearance).

The geometrical image, as well as the mention of puppets, suggests a rejoinder to Kleist. Kleist's ballet dancer claims as an advantage of the puppets that nothing hinders them, not even "the inertia of matter,"[3] whereas Hofmannsthal insists that only hindering or "opposing" forces enable us to live truly. What the dancer learns from the bear, that there is a state of "Grazie," or perfect harmony with the world, for which we must strive, is the opposite of what Hofmannsthal learns from his horse: that there is a unique *value* in our having to deal with the disharmonies that hinder us. Or we think of another passage from 1895 (P1 231), on the actor Mitterwurzer, where the idea of a "truth" in gestures, produced by means of a "center of gravity" (see K2 339–41), is a clear echo of Kleist. But the conclusion, that even those bodily motions which originate "beyond consciousness" must be "known" by the actor in that he "knows himself," in "conscious virtuosity," affirms precisely the sort of self-consciousness that Kleist's dancer rejects.

Hofmannsthal later speaks specifically of a "parallel in form: the arithmetical in Kleist and in Poe" (A 63).[4] Kleist thinks too mathematically, in riddles and problems. He does not confront life as it really is; his approach is "leichtfertig," treating others like puppets or mere counters. He himself, according to Hofmannsthal, unwittingly condemns his own procedure when he speaks of being "irresistibly drawn into an action that one had permitted oneself merely to play with" (A 72). But Hofmannsthal's disapproval of Kleist's thus merely playing a kind of number-game with the complexity and anguish of the human condition becomes explicit only in such passing remarks. His disapproval is in general expressed less by polemic than by disregard: "There are some very great authors to whom I would never seek a serious vital relation, [among them] Kleist, because of his distortions [Verzerrung]" (H/RB-H, p. 168). His disregard of Kleist, the scarcity of direct references in his early works and notes, therefore does not imply ignorance. In fact, his reaction to the puppet-theater essay was such as to make him deliberately disregard it rather than answer it. In his view, Kleist's very approach to the idea of self-consciousness is wrongheaded ("verzerrt"); the quest for an eventual transcendence of self-consciousness appears to Hofmannsthal as the expression not merely of a false opinion, but of an intellectually suicidal poetic attitude that must, if possible, be consigned to oblivion, not dignified by discussion.

2

Let us look at the poem "Terzinen II" (1894):

Die Stunden! wo wir auf das helle Blauen
Des Meeres starren und den Tod verstehn
So leicht und feierlich und ohne Grauen,

Wie kleine Mädchen, die sehr blass aussehn,
Mit grossen Augen, und die immer frieren,
An einem Abend stumm vor sich hinsehn

Und wissen, dass das Leben jetzt aus ihren
Schlaftrunk'nen Gliedern still hinüberfliesst
In Bäum' und Gras, und sich matt lächelnd zieren,

Wie eine Heilige die ihr Blut vergiesst. (WI 49: G 17–18)

Those hours! when we stare at the bright, ever-bluer blue of the sea and understand death, as easily and solemnly and without terror as little girls (who look very pale, with large eyes, and are always chilly) one evening gaze mutely into space and know that life is now silently draining out of their sleep-drunken limbs into the trees and grass, and with a wan smile put on airs, like a martyr who is spilling her blood.

The structure of the poem gives special emphasis to the verb "sich zieren," "put on airs," in line 9, a verb that also figures prominently in Kleist, where the supposed advantage of the puppet over the human dancer is "daß sie sich niemals zierte" (K2 341) "that it never puts on airs." We expect that the clause "Wie kleine Mädchen ..." will be elliptical, having the understood predicate "den Tod verstehn"; and especially after the lengthy series of attributes in lines 4 and 5, the addition of a separate predicate for the little girls comes as a surprise. The new predicate, however, "vor sich hinsehn / Und wissen," though unexpected, is also exactly parallel to the preceding "starren und ... verstehn"; the girls' gazing into space recalls "our" staring at the sea, and the knowledge of life's draining into nature is a variation on "understanding death." The sense of completeness produced by this parallel, plus the apparent need for a development of the poem's opening exclamation, suggests strongly that with the words "In Bäum' und Gras," the image of the little girls is finished. We expect it now to be dropped in favor of "those hours" that the poem apparently wants to talk about.

But this is not what happens. The subject, "kleine Mädchen," of what is after all only a subordinate clause in the still unfinished main sentence, now receives yet another predicate, which not only

disrupts the neat parallel, *starren* : *verstehn* :: *hinsehn* : *wissen*, but also, in the verb "sich zieren," suggests self-conscious affectation and so apparently clashes with the idea, in line 3, of an effortless and natural relation to death. The expectations awakened by the syntax are thus thwarted not once but twice; and while there is a resolution into symmetry the first time, there is none the second. The second unexpected predicate, "und sich matt lächelnd zieren," is set off very strongly against the apparent meaning and structure of the language up to its occurrence, and so becomes a principal focus of the reader's attention.

In order to understand this dissonance or asymmetry, and in the process satisfy ourselves that an awareness of Kleist does figure here, we must understand that a specific *setting* is implied by the poem. Even in the absence of actual description, the language is modulated so as to evoke clearly the idea of a definite and visualizable social situation. The locution "sehr blass aussehn" ("look very pale"), since pallor is by definition visually perceived, is strictly a pleonasm (as "*are* pale" or "look *weak*" would not be); and such pleonasms, though disturbing in what we like to think of as the organic compactness of lyric poetry, are common in conversation, especially in polite conversations on uncomfortable subjects. Given the idea of death, there is a clear feeling here of social or conversational *delicacy*, since "look" makes a less positive statement than "are" would, and since "look pale" avoids the conclusion "weak," even though the ominous "*very* pale" indicates that this conclusion is present in the speaker's mind. We detect a delicate conversational avoidance of the unpleasant truth actually implied: that such pale, chill-prone little girls are not likely to survive into adulthood. And it is by way of this suggestion of polite conversation – along with the ideas "one evening" and "trees and grass" – that the poem's scene is set. What we hear, as it were *behind* the language in lines 4 and 5 – in the familiarity implied by "*always* chilly" as well as in "look very pale" – are the guarded comments of adults, probably ladies, concerning a sickly child in a garden whom they observe in the course of a social gathering in the evening, perhaps from a terrace, a polite gathering of relatively well-off people.

And this sense of polite society then provides a context for the idea of "a martyr who is spilling her blood," which we shall now tend to associate with the *painting* of a saint, the sort of painting that belongs in the social atmosphere evoked by the language.[5] The grammatically required predicate in the next-to-last clause, "Wie

eine Heilige (sich matt lächelnd ziert)," re-enforces this suggestion by the idea of an affected nobility, a posture, in suffering. But at the same time, the relation between the predicates explicitly applied to the little girl and the painted martyr, between "sich zieren" and "ihr Blut vergiesst," presents the little girl as the *more artificial* of the two. This suggestion can be explained if we keep in mind the scene that has been set, if we are willing, as it were, actually to *see* by way of an extended chain of verbal inference – for such seeing is what the poem requires of us. Namely, the little girl, in her premonition of death, feels an affinity with the painted martyr she has seen, and now, in the garden, is posturing ("sich ziert") *in imitation* of the painting. Thus we find ourselves back at the puppet-theater essay, since conscious posturing in imitation of a work of art is also what Kleist's narrator describes in his anecdote of the young man at the baths.[6]

The figure of the little girl, introduced as an instance of effortless meditative genuineness, comes to be associated with the idea of self-conscious affectation, and the poem thus refuses to accept a strict "arithmetical" opposition between those two poles. True gracefulness is here imagined as arising "only in the struggle with Opposing Powers," only by way of the self-conscious movement that sullies it, not as a negation of consciousness; the little girl is graceful or genuine precisely in the act of consciously posturing. And I contend that this paradoxical situation is part of Hofmannsthal's response to Kleist.

We can now also begin to understand the specifically poetic reason for Hofmannsthal's position, by understanding this poem's implied relation to its reader. It is clear that the image of the little "girls," in its visualizable aspect, refers to only one girl; otherwise we must imagine a whole troop of poor sickly creatures posturing in the garden. Moreover, the poem moves from an external toward an internal perspective with regard to the "girls," and this movement, like the singular "eine Heilige," reflects the focussing of our attention upon the feelings of one person. In lines 4 and 5 we share the detached perspective of observing adults; but the two strong enjambements in lines 6 and 7, along with the strikingly un-iambic rhythmical unit ´´˘´˘ ("hinsehn / Und wissen," "Schlaftrunk'nen Gliedern"), create an impression of sudden fluidity, a slipping out of our detachment into direct sympathy with the flow of experience, a "Hinüberfließen" into the little girl's own mind. Thus the suggestion of the girl's imitating the painting is also supported, since the image of "eine Heilige," by following the shift to an

internal perspective, is ascribed to that perspective. It is the little girl herself who is thinking about the martyr.

And yet, by adding the predicate "sich zieren," the poet refuses to let us forget that the grammatical subject is *plural*, suggesting the relatively abstract idea of a class of individuals rather than a single human figure with whom we are meant to identify emotionally. The reader is thus detached (explicit plural) from the little girl's experience while at the same time he is also involved in it (implicit singular, internal perspective); and this paradoxical situation is in turn *an exact reflection of the experience itself.* The combination of detachment and identification that the language imposes on the reader echoes the combination of self-detachment and self-identity or genuineness in the girl. The paradox may therefore be developed one step further: precisely the reader's intellectual detachment from the experience of the poem *is* a kind of identification with the little girl, and in fact any such identification would be incomplete if it did not include an element of detachment corresponding to the girl's "sich zieren." Readerly detachment, in other words, here itself becomes the vehicle of that profound resonance between reader and language that Hofmannsthal and his critics sometimes call "magic" or "mood." This point is crucial and will be picked up again shortly.

3

Let us turn now to "Ein Traum von großer Magie" (1895; W1 52–3; G 20–1), where the Magician is described in terms that suggest very strongly the image of a puppet. He leaps from cliff to cliff "mit leichtem Schwung der Lenden" (we think of the weightless puppets' "Schwung der Glieder" in Kleist [K2 342]): with a light swing of the hips, while presumably the legs dangle after as they do when a string-puppet is made to "leap." In any event, the Magician, like Kleist's puppets, represents a state of existence unsullied by disruptive self-consciousness, therefore free, entirely in harmony with the world, unencumbered by weight or inertia. And at the end of the poem, after he has moved steadily upward, leaving the earth "tief unten," we hear:

> Cherub und hoher Herr ist unser Geist,
> Wohnt nicht in uns, und in die obern Sterne
> Setzt er den Stuhl und läßt uns viel verwaist.

Cherub and exalted Lord is our own spirit. It does not dwell in us but takes its seat in the upper stars and leaves us orphaned.

The expulsion from Eden is also a central theme in the puppet-theater essay; and the idea that both the Lord and his cherub are our own spirit that has somehow deserted us recalls Kleist's notion of an "infinite consciousness" (K2 345) that, were we to attain it, would restore our paradisal naturalness and make gods of us. Spirit or intellect ("Geist") is infinite in the sense that everything is possible in thought; for the intellect, as for the Magician, "nothing is near or far, or small or large." But precisely the infinity of intellect is what causes confusion in self-consciousness, by being out of harmony with the limitedness of our real bodily and temporal condition. If our whole consciousness, meaning not only intellect and imagination but also our direct perception of objects (including ourselves), could become uniformly infinite, then the confusion would disappear as it does for the Magician. But in actuality we are divided self-consciously, and the infinite part of our consciousness dwells somehow apart from our finite condition, as it were in the stars.

At the end of the poem, however, this divided condition is seen in a different light:

> Doch Er ist Feuer uns im tiefsten Kerne
> – So ahnte mir, da ich den Traum da fand –
> Und redet mit den Feuern jener Ferne
>
> Und lebt in mir, wie ich in meiner Hand.

For He is a fire in our deepest core – it dawned on me when I found the dream there – and discourses with the fires of that vast distance, and lives in me as I live in my hand.

My own hand, this external, distinguishable object which yet at the same time is somehow filled with the same consciousness that perceives it from a distance. The relation between myself and my hand is analogous to the relation between my intellect or spirit and myself, except that in looking at my hand I experience the relation from above rather than below, from the infinite point of view rather than the finite. I am infinitely more than my hand is; I could exist as myself without it. But I also exist somehow inside my hand; my hand is not merely an object, any more (by metaphorical inference) than my empirical self is merely an object from the point of view of that infinite intellect which dwells in the stars.

The mysterious self-conscious relation of separateness-in-unity (that I am myself and yet also observe myself as it were from a distance) is thus not merely an uncomfortable and perhaps tran-

scendable accident; it is the central structural theme of our existence from top to bottom, including not only the anguish of intellectual alienation from experienced immediacy, and not only our curious situation in our own bodies, but also (as is suggested after the poem's break by the turn to first-person plural) our relation to other people. Self-consciousness, in other words, far from hindering our achievement of unified being, is the structural principle that knits our being together. Hence the ambiguity of the capitalized "Er," which in one sense refers to the Magician *as opposed* ("Doch") to "our spirit [or intellect]," but at the same time (by grammatical continuity with the tercet preceding, by the analogy with the self and the hand, the raised and rising perspective, looking down on its object) also *is* "unser Geist" itself, which looks down on us from the stars.[7] Precisely the *separation* between our inmost fiery being ("tiefster Kern") and our divine but detached intellectualness is also a *union* of the two, a communication ("Reden") from fire to fire, a realization of the magical totality of our nature. The Magician, even in his quality as a Kleistian puppet-turned-god, embodies the anti-Kleistian truth that precisely the tension between infinite and finite aspects of ourselves is what generates our magically total being in the first place, a truth we may envision by the simple exercise of contemplating our own hand.

If Hofmannsthal's position vis-à-vis Kleist is referred, in the "Terzinen," ultimately to exigencies of poetic communication, the relation between language and reader, then in the "Traum" it is referred to a kind of philosophical psychology, the understanding that we *experience* our nature as a totality not only in spite of, but also because of our self-consciously disrupted condition. "The soul is inexhaustible because it is at once both observer and object" (P1 8), says Hofmannsthal very early; and then later: "By avoiding thought we cease to be astonished at life" (A 104). Without conscious "Denken," without the internal separation that makes our soul "inexhaustible," the unity or totality of our being might conceivably represent a truth, but could never become a truth *for us*, never the distinguishable (and thus necessarily astonishing) element of knowledge or experience that Kleist apparently wants it to be. We are reminded of Nietzsche's idea that internal disharmony in the human condition has a positive value and essentially the same structuring function as dissonance in music.[8]

To be sure, self-consciousness is still a problem and a torment. Those moments, or "those hours," when our whole being becomes

an experience for us – whether in dreams or in revelatory flashes of metaphor, or in staring at the sea or at our own hand – are in the final analysis only tantalizing; in the very process of reflecting upon them, holding them fast, possessing them, we lose them. But Kleist's view of the problem – as if it were a problem to be solved, by striving for or at least imagining a condition beyond self-consciousness – is "distorted." Such a condition would entail the collapse of just that integrated totality of being at which our striving had been aimed. Self-consciousness is in truth a *fruitful* problem, a problem not to be solved but to be exploited as the generating force of our full self-realization: "leben oder sich ausleben nur im Kampf mit den Widerstrebenden Mächten." We must learn to experience self-consciousness not as a problem at all, but as a divine gift, as itself the ultimate "magic" in our nature.

4

This much, I think, suffices to locate the poetic and philosophical position Hofmannsthal adopts in response to Kleist's puppets. In order now to explore the problems that beset that position, we can begin with the work Hofmannsthal himself called a puppet-show, *Das Kleine Welttheater*.[9] It is not necessary to say exactly what each figure in this little pageant represents; for our purposes it is sufficient that the idea of "Die Glücklichen" (W3 131; G 297), "The Happy Ones," is associated with the idea of puppets, and that the Madman is meant to embody the essence, "the purest state" (W3 623; A 223) of such happiness. The connection with a Kleistian idea of the puppet's gracefulness can be made by way of the remark, in the "Prolog" to *Die Frau im Fenster*, that puppets "possess a boundless grace" (W3 129; G 136), which recalls the "indescribable grace" of the Madman (W3 142; G 309).

Happiness in *Das Kleine Welttheater* therefore has to do with being a puppet, with a grace or naturalness born of unselfconsciousness, and Hofmannsthal later applies to this condition, in English, the term "state," which I take to mean, in roughly Blake's sense, the opposite of a self or individual. Each of the figures on the bridge is a "state," and I maintain that Hofmannsthal's characterization of the play as a "lyrical dialogized trifle" (B1 215) justifies our imagining all these figures as states or moods or masks of the *same* individual,[10] a single "lyric ego." This idea, at any rate, produces an exact parallel with the verses "Zum Gedächtnis des Schauspielers Mitterwurzer," in which the actor is imagined as the

single departed soul of what is now only a pile of puppets. *Das Kleine Welttheater* thus derives its title from the idea of "die kleine Welt" or microcosm. In this theater it is shown how one human individual is himself the whole world; and the "purest state," the Madman, articulates directly the doctrine that all the world is "cooked into" individual fate (W3 148; G 316).

Das Kleine Welttheater, then, is a theater of internal dynamics in the self, and its climax, accordingly, is the happening of self-consciousness, the simultaneous appearance of several different "states" in tension with one another. The young girl and the voice of the ominous street-singer are present together; and the Madman is then accompanied by a Servant and a Doctor, "Opposing Powers" whose task is to control him. Precisely the "purest" state, as represented by the Madman, the state of absolute certainty that "we are one with everything that is or ever was, no mere contingency, excluded from *nothing*" (A 107), has an inherent tendency toward self-destruction (to hurl itself from the bridge); for individual existence – existence on the bridge, in the condition of being always "between" or in transit, our self-conscious or temporal condition – is merely an impediment from the point of view of the truth of oneness with all things. That pure state (our knowledge of truth) therefore cannot exist except by being restrained. But how does this restraint arise, if the Doctor and the Servant are also manifestations of the single human microcosm that generates the play?

The Madman compares his situation to Dionysus' temporary imprisonment by Pentheus (W3 149; G 316); and Pentheus, says Hofmannsthal, is a man "for whom the act of separating and keeping separate is everything" (D2 526). It is separation or analysis that imprisons Dionysus; in metaphysical terms, it is the process of individuation that keeps Dionysus from becoming what he truly is, the realized utter unity of all things. Young Hofmannsthal notes, "The basic tragic myth: the world, divided up into individuals, yearns for unity, Dionysus Zagreus desires to be reborn" (A 106); and while it is true that the Madman's mirror (W3 147; G 315) suggests Narcissus, I think the simultaneous allusion to Zagreus, to Dionysus' fatal preoccupation with his toys, especially the mirror, is unmistakable.[11]

In his own view, then, the Madman is restrained from Dionysian self-realization; but as far as we can see, he is saved from mere self-destruction by drowning. Translated into the terms of the myth: if the original Dionysus were actually reborn, if the individ-

uated world were actually resolved into absolute unity, the result would be mere chaos, for existence depends on individuated forms and the possibility of distinguishing among them. In Hofmannsthal's notes on August 1, 1895 there is a formula that evidently became part of the conception of the Madman, "To be imprisoned in life" (A 126), and on August 2 this idea is developed: "Form the Sustainer; world = chaos imprisoned in forms and so saved" (A 127). Self-realization for the Madman-Dionysus, the realization of a unity beyond all form, is the same as self-destruction or chaos. In order to exist at all, Dionysus must be restrained ("imprisoned" = "saved") from realizing himself absolutely.

This is the office of the Servant and the Doctor, whose relation to each other and to the Madman is given symbolically in the opening stage direction (W3 142; G 309). The Servant, who goes "ahead" of the Madman and describes him admiringly, represents the anticipatory *desire* for Dionysian unity, while the Doctor, who comes "behind" and analyzes the Madman's condition, represents *reflection* (in German, more vividly, "*Nach*-denken") on the idea of unity. But the important point is that the Servant and the Doctor cooperate in restraining the Madman, even though the Doctor's analysis of Dionysian unity into ideas like "evil" and "misery" (W3 147; G 314) apparently opposes the desire represented by the Servant. Again, rational self-consciousness is not a strictly negative factor with respect to our desire for an infinitely harmonious existence; on the contrary, precisely our reflectiveness combines with that desire in order to *preserve* the vision and possibility of "indescribable grace."

That the Servant and the Doctor cooperate is a key symbol. Self-consciousness, represented by the division of the play's unseen ego into three distinct figures, is the natural inner self-restraint by which we are enabled to realize ourselves fully. The Dionysian truth insisted on by the Madman, that the self or soul is utterly one with all things, would be empty, would have relation to nothing, if there were not in us an affirming and admiring consciousness of it (the Servant); such consciousness, however, entails an internal separation in the self, and so necessarily calls the truth into question (the Doctor). This is the paradox of the soul: that in order to be the one thing that it truly is, and one with the infinitely reconciled merging of all other things, it must necessarily also be a self-questioning and self-conflicting plurality.

But *Das Kleine Welttheater* exhibits a type of irony that is present in neither of the two lyric poems we have discussed. In both poems the affirmation of self-consciousness apparently serves the end of transcendence. The little girl's affectation is the source of a self-reconciled understanding of death; and the finite, conscious experience of viewing one's own hand is transmuted into a fiery union with the universal ego of the Magician. In *Das Kleine Welttheater*, on the other hand, though the Madman has the last word, the last action is that of the Servant and the Doctor. The Madman, who plays with a mirror, literally a reflective device, while expounding his theory of the magical self, represents graphically the truth of the poems, the anti-Kleistian truth that reflective self-consciousness, far from needing to be transcended, is itself already a condition of self-transcendence; and just this is then the doctrine he expounds: that the magical unity of the self with all things is already in effect here and now, not merely an ideal to be striven for. But the little struggle at the end insists that *even in this form* truth can be realized only by being forcibly restrained. We view the Madman's thinking from a detached perspective; the emphasis is not on the metaphysical implications of self-conscious existence, but on its practical limitedness.

This difference reflects a general developmental crisis undergone by Hofmannsthal in 1897, when not only *Das Kleine Welttheater*, but also *Die Frau im Fenster* and *Die Hochzeit der Sobeide* were composed. The new element in these last two plays, as also in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, seems to be what Hofmannsthal has in mind when he writes of himself in 1917, "Youthful phase: magic. Varese. Later a plastic shaping [Gestaltung]" (A 232). "Varese" refers to the two weeks in August and September 1897 during which nearly 2,000 lines of verse had been produced (see B1 232), including all of *Die Frau im Fenster* plus its "Prolog," probably most of the *Sobeide*, much of *Das Kleine Welttheater*, perhaps some of *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*,[12] a plan for *Der weiße Fächer*, and a number of poems. And I think it is clear that in his 1917 note Hofmannsthal does *not* mean to associate this creative explosion with the stage of "magic," especially if *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*, a symbolic renunciation of magic, fits in here. Varese represents a turning point, away from "magic" toward "plastic shaping," away from lyric drama toward *Theater in Versen*, toward a theater of objectively shaped characters in substantial plots.

And yet this crisis is not a repudiation but a natural result of Hofmannsthal's earlier thinking, for an affirmation of finite existence in the real world is already implied by the affirmation of self-consciousness in the lyric poems discussed above. Self-consciousness is not a fruitful problem, and does not enable us to realize our total nature, except insofar as it involves a gaping discrepancy between infinite intellect and our actual finite condition. Therefore the affirmation of self-consciousness implies an affirmation of reality; as long as the finite is regarded merely as a *condition*, it is coordinated with the infinite, subsumed under it, and not affirmed *as* finite. The internal logic of the lyric poems runs as follows: the starting point is "the thought that we are one with everything that is or ever was," the idea of the Dionysian self embracing all being in utter unity; but such infinite unity tends toward nothingness, cannot be experienced except by being divided against itself into finite forms; our true universal self, in order to exist, requires self-consciousness, hence self-separation, internal disharmony, a finite aspect, a limited situation in the imperfect real world. The real world is thus an inescapable consequence and product of the self's own internal dynamics.

What bothers Hofmannsthal in 1897 is not this logic itself but the direction from which he had been accustomed to approach it. There is a distinct hint of authorial self-criticism when the Servant says of the Madman: "With the enormous melee [Gemenge] that he bears within himself, he begins metaphorically to grasp after the enormous melee of external existence" (W3 146; G 313). For this is an exact description of Hofmannsthal's own procedure in the lyric poems, his attempt to construct external reality as a whole out of purely internal, logical relationships in the self-conflicting self. Similarly, the "Prolog" to *Die Frau im Fenster* casts an ironic light on that play by relating its genesis to a state in which the "Dichter" had been wholly oblivious to the real world.

The trouble with the lyrical procedure is that while it acknowledges the necessity of an affirmation of finite external reality, it also fails to *carry out* such an affirmation. Self-consciousness and external reality are affirmed only conditionally, as the path to a self-transcendence here and now (the Madman's doctrine), which means that a vestige of the negative Kleistian attitude toward self-consciousness is still present. If the transcendent truth of the self is achieved only by a commitment of the self to finite existence, then that commitment must be made unreservedly; for the sake of the *achievement* of self-transcendence, we must firmly renounce the

idea, however attractive and ultimately true it may be, just as the emperor Porphyrogenitus must renounce the seductive witch in order to find "his way home" (W3 208; G 296). The Dionysian Madman in us, even though he knows the truth exactly as the author and reader of the lyric poems know it, beyond Kleistian "distortion," must still be forcibly restrained.

Translated into artistic terms, this means that in order to realize the "magic" of poetry, in order to achieve a valid poetic transcendence of the boundary between "Welt und Ich" (W1 42; G 73), the poet must aim not at this magic itself but at its opposite, at "Gestaltung," at the creation of clear, objectively shaped realities. The relation between *Die Frau im Fenster* and its "Prolog" is an allegory of this situation. All poetry has its true origin deep within the self-preoccupied self, in ecstatic visions like that of the "Prolog"; yet the proper artistic realization of this visionary surge, despite the stated preference of the "Dichter," is not a puppet-show of pure mental projections, but a drama of human interaction in the real world. While *Die Frau im Fenster* is "lyrical" in consisting mainly of one character's musings, still it develops a wealth of physical detail and incident and intrigue far beyond anything in Hofmannsthal's earlier plays. It evokes not an *état d'âme* but an entirely substantial reality, and in combination with its "Prolog" it thus expresses the recognition that only by way of such *mimesis*[13] can the visionary magic of poetry actually be effected.

6

"Wir haben keine neuere Literatur. Wir haben Goethe und Ansätze" (A 61), says the *Buch der Freunde*. There is no "modern literature" in German; there is only Goethe, plus various plans, intentions, programs, incipient endeavors. And Hofmannsthal's Balzac says:

> Goethe could turn a person's heart to stone, he could kill a soul and then turn away as if nothing had happened, and go to his plants, his stones, his colors ... Who is it who killed Heinrich von Kleist's soul? Who?
>
> (P2 45–6)

In the all-encompassing "harmony of his soul," in his "conversations" with the light, "powerful enough to disturb the stars in the sky" (P2 46) – we recall the Magician in the "Traum" – Goethe had as it were occupied the whole middle ground of poetry, forcing

other poets into untenable extreme positions. What irritates Kleist, for example in his bitter epigram on "Herr von Goethe" (K1 20), is the aura of conscious, self-analytic mastery in Goethe's classical productions; and it is this effect that Hofmannsthal's Balzac has in mind when he speaks of Goethe's power to destroy. A spirit like Kleist's, in order not to be obliterated by Goethe's overpowering presence, must seek to surpass the classical harmony of conscious self-control, and so is tempted to commit itself (as in "Über das Marionettentheater") to a theory of transcendent harmony, in which our actual self-conscious condition, the internal dissonance which is by rights the very birth of poetry, assumes an unnatural negative value. Thus the soul of a poet can be forced into an essentially anti-poetic attitude, driven to a kind of suicide.

Goethe is therefore a danger even for Hofmannsthal, who recognizes in 1897 that in the very process of disapproving of Kleist, he has himself been drifting toward a Kleistian extremity, toward a concentration on the transcendent that must now be corrected by mimetic discipline. But this developmental advance in 1897 is not a self-repudiation. The danger of a Kleistian attitude toward self-consciousness had been clear to Hofmannsthal from early on, and remained so. In the early poems and in Varese, as also later, Hofmannsthal's development is always aimed *into* the Goethean middle ground, toward practical, self-conscious balance, not radical breakthrough. His "classical period" extends from Loris to the grave. But it is a precarious classicism, a classicism which, while never repudiating itself, must still constantly examine and correct itself, be constantly on guard against its own self-destructive tendencies, which it sees reflected with special clarity in the life, works and letters of Kleist.

7

Let us conclude by remarking on a late work of Hofmannsthal's in which the awareness of Kleist's puppet-theater surfaces one more time. In the ghost scene from the 1925 version of *Der Turm* we read that Sigismund "takes up a large bone, swings it, utters an incantation and, in the same rhythm, takes heavy steps, like a bear chained by the leg to a stake" (D4 184), which recalls the fencing bear in Kleist (K2 344–5). Sigismund thus reverts to a pre-conscious or pre-verbal form of existence, a chthonic world of Dionysian unity, as opposed to the binding forms of reality; and his reversion is clearly an overstepping of bounds, because he intends to make

use of the magical experience (as intelligence concerning Olivier) in his practical activity as a general. He wants to have in life what can be had by only the dead, "the Upper and the Lower together" (D4 186), both rational consciousness and the unintellectualized self-assurance of Kleist's fencing bear. He wants to realize his ghost-vision as a kind of back door to Paradise, which can be entered even by the self-conscious individual; and this wish is his downfall, for neither Paradise nor its back door exists.

Hofmannsthal has turned Kleist's image exactly onto its head. Whereas the bear in Kleist is proof against any attack by virtue of his unselfconsciousness, Sigismund, at the moment when he resembles the bear, becomes vulnerable. What had protected him from Olivier in Act IV is the self-conscious intellect. The lesson dinned into him by Julian, concerning the dream-quality of all conscious experience, has erected for him a kind of "wall" behind which his inwardness is realized for him as absolute security (D4 156). The conviction of our inviolable self, our maximally intense self-consciousness, is our only bulwark against the chaos Olivier represents; and when Sigismund himself violates the boundary of inward and outward in Act V, when he attempts to mobilize the truth of sheer unified being in the domain of real finitude, when he attempts to transcend the self-conscious condition that is both our fate and our true freedom, when he grasps at the chimera of Kleist's "infinite consciousness," he is destroyed.

And like *Das Kleine Welttheater*, Sigismund's temptation also represents the danger that attends Hofmannsthal's anti-Kleistian poetic position. For the invasion of our problematic but real self-conscious existence by a transcendent truth that harbors a tendency toward chaos is precisely what happens in the lyric poems discussed above. The truth of our unity with all things is not sought beyond consciousness, but revealed *in* it. Nor is it an accident that we find this problem suggested even in Hofmannsthal's latest works; for the problem never goes away. Kleist's position is wrong; but an insidious wrongness also always inhabits the attempt to rectify that position. Even the most resolute mimetic procedure, once we recognize the poetic reason for it, puts on the seductive power of truth, becomes an invasion by transcendence as chaos of the very reality we had insisted upon for the sake of transcendence as an energizing and deepening presence in our consciously articulated existence.

2

LANGUAGE AS POETRY

The question of poetic language in Hofmannsthal is exactly analogous to the question of self-consciousness. Does the language of poetry somehow transcend or supersede our everyday language of conceptual discourse and communication? Again the notion of strict transcendence is rejected, and again, as in the case of conscious or temporal existence, its rejection engenders problems, problems that we can deal with adequately only by shifting our intellectual focus from the individual's linguistic experience to that of the community.

I

The idea of "magic" is common in discussions of Hofmannsthal's youthful work, for example those of Pestalozzi and Hoppe.[1] And Pestalozzi, working mainly from a speech in *Der weiße Fächer* (W3 156; G 225), associates magic with the idea of a "language of life" which is something like what Wolfram Mauser later defines as "the existentially immediate utterance [daseinsunmittelbare Aussage]."[2] This language of life exists only as "spoken" language and bypasses our understanding in order to awaken a sympathetic "resonance" in us (p. 33). In language as we ordinarily use it, the immediacy of life has petrified into a system of concepts; words are "lies," because the genuineness or pure presence of the "instant," by being contained in language, is "no longer true" (p. 48). But "poetry finds a way out of the curse of concepts [see G 514]. The poet is a Midas in reverse [A 93], breathing life into things fossilized by conceptual thought" (p. 56).

How is this magical transformation of the language of concepts into the language of life supposed to work? Pestalozzi fastens on the idea of a "*mood* [Stimmung], of which we know that the opposition between ego and world is suspended in it. For the space of a heartbeat the ego feels itself united with the All" (p. 93). But

Hofmannsthal's own early formulations concerning the "mood" of poetry are different in emphasis.

> I ask myself whether all the tedious chatter about individuality, style, sentiment, mood, etc., has not smothered your awareness that the material of poetry is words, that a poem is a weightless web of words which, by their arrangement, their sound, their content, by combining visual and auditory memories with the element of motion, call forth an exactly circumscribed if transient state of the soul, a state of dreamlike clarity, that we call mood. (PI 263)

The aim of a poem is still something "we call mood." But Hofmannsthal insists that the poem itself, insofar as it can be said even to exist, let alone operate, is composed of nothing but words. How does the "magic" or "mood" of poetry *belong to the words of the poem*, not merely to the emotional state of reader or author?

In Pestalozzi's terms this question is unanswerable. Words as mere words, even in poetry, are "lies"; whatever is "contained in" words is the opposite of a vital poetic magic. But if the question cannot be answered, then it is possible to call *any* piece of language "magical," provided we feel that it has a certain effect on us. Moreover, Pestalozzi means by mood a condition in which "the opposition between ego and world is suspended," whereas Hofmannsthal describes the poetic "state of soul" as "exactly circumscribed [genau umschrieben]," which does not suggest the idea of an ecstasy in which "the ego feels itself united with the All." Pestalozzi himself suggests a way out of these difficulties:

> Paradise cannot be an object of will ... The ego that engulfs the whole world [in "Der Kaiser von China spricht"] can still not get rid of itself.
>
> Hofmannsthal knows this, but manages in his early lyric to include the difficulty in the poem as an opposing voice, a kind of shadow to set off the light. The very questionability of the procedure helps make the ego forget that questionability for a moment. (pp. 100–1)

Only thus can poetry actually achieve the goal Pestalozzi sets it. Words always "lie" to us, insofar as we understand them only by reference to concepts; this conceptual "opposing voice," opposed to the vital immediacy of "magic," is unavoidable even in poetry, and must therefore somehow be included in the poem. The very questionability of poetry's claim to "magical" value must itself become the *vehicle* of magic.

2

We have already seen how this process works in the poem "Terzinen II," in that the reader's unavoidable intellectual detachment from the poem's experience (his conceptual rather than vital relation to the words) is itself utilized as a means of creating sympathy or "resonance" between him and the little girl of the image. The idea of the reader used in this argument is not psychological; it depends not on an unverifiable assumption concerning our emotional reactions, but on an idea of the way language is *normally* perceived and understood – or at least of the way our philosophical tradition leads us to imagine language is normally understood – from a more or less detached intellectual perspective and by reference to concepts.[3]

But the idea of conceptual language brings into focus a further problem in "Terzinen II," where the first two lines apparently promise us an "understanding" of death. For this promise is never redeemed. The speaker in fact appears to presuppose on our part a specific way of experiencing our mortality, a type of experience so familiar to us that the mere mention of "those hours" in which it occurs is sufficient to evoke it. The poem appears to approach us in a sense dishonestly, by attempting to persuade us that we already understand its meaning; the "we" at the beginning seems meant to flatter us into complicity in the mere pretence of communication. It may be true that the artistic structure makes available to us a kind of magical identification with the vividly imagined little girl of the metaphor; but the main statement of the poem is still never completed grammatically, and the thought anticipates more rounding than it receives. These worries, I think, can all be dealt with; but we do not do justice to the text if we make them too easy for ourselves.

The idea of death in "Terzinen II" can be approached via the idea of transience or time, which Hofmannsthal understands as a mental process, related to the action and complications of self-consciousness. In an early note we read:

> We have no consciousness beyond the instant, because each of our souls only lives for an instant . . . My ego of *yesterday* is of as little concern to me as the ego of Napoleon or Goethe. (A 93)

Our memory, by which we experience time, is only an unverifiable mental image that arises here and now. Our "ego of *yesterday*" is merely that one out of the multitude of "our" souls (our experi-

enced instants) which we suppose we actually were yesterday, but of which we can now have no direct knowledge, not even to the extent of being certain of its existence.

By the time of the "Terzinen," this idea has been developed further, especially in "Terzinen I" which is entitled "Über Vergänglichkeit":

> Dies ist ein Ding, das keiner voll aussinnt,
> Und viel zu grauenvoll, als daß man klage:
> Daß alles gleitet und vorüberrinnt.
>
> Und daß mein eignes Ich, durch nichts gehemmt,
> Herüberglitt aus einem kleinen Kind,
> Mir wie ein Hund unheimlich stumm und fremd.
>
> (W I 45; G 17)

This is a thing that no one can think through completely, and much too terrifying to be complained about: that everything slips and flows past. And that my own ego, unimpeded, slipped out of a little child toward me, as uncannily mute and alien as a dog.

My past ego, that is, though utterly alien and unverifiable, is still *my* ego that somehow finds its way from the child I was once to the person I am now. Time and memory are constituted by a process of separation from *ourselves*, from something we still experience ourselves as identical with; self-consciousness, as *self*-consciousness, is our experience of time. Only in the medium of time (as obviously not in the medium of space) can we stand apart from ourselves as "at once observer and object," which is what makes the soul "inexhaustible" (P I 8). And it is only by way of such self-separation that we experience time as distinct from space. We cannot conceive of "yesterday" without imagining an ego of yesterday. Yesterday, emptied of our own ego, would have exactly the same character as a distant point in space, and the experience of time would not happen.

Or to put it differently, the act of remembering always contains an element of forgetting, "that uncanny forgetting from instant to instant" (A 228). What we remember is always ourselves, but ourselves in a form that has grown alien, and it is as if we were in the process of constantly forgetting how to be what we still are. This self-conscious process, the essence of our experience of transience, is reflected in the *structure* of "Terzinen II." The nominalized infinitive "Blauen" captures the idea of an ever-deepening submergence of consciousness in the blue of the sea, a rapt and

progressive self-forgetfulness that then appears in the development of the poem itself. It is as if the speaker were constantly losing the thread of his own thinking. The image of the little girls, originally introduced only as a metaphor, soon becomes the main content; the explicit plural in this image gradually crumbles to reveal an essential singular; and at the end yet another metaphor is introduced, which refers not to the original "we," nor yet to the little girls as a class, but specifically to that one vividly sensed little girl in the garden, as though the rest had been forgotten. Indeed that metaphor is recognizable as a self-reflective act *within* the girl's mind. The idea of a conscious process that generates our experience of transience is thus present in the *movement* of the language, which suggests a forgetfulness of its own content. And especially in Viennese dialect, the poem ends with a pun on "vergießt" and "vergißt," on the martyr's "spilling" or "forgetting" her blood.

We are offered not an understanding of death but an intimation. Each of our "souls" lives only for an instant and then lives no more; or as we read later, "Sacrifice as self-relinquishment. (This already resides in the transition from moment to moment)" (A 217). Our mere existence in time is already an unceasing intimation of mortality, the constant undergoing of a form of self-sacrifice; and the poem attempts to bring this aspect of our normal experience into focus by evoking it in "the element of movement." Hence the opening suggestion that the reader already understands the poem's meaning. Clemens, in "Das Gespräch über Gedichte," says of George's "Komm in den totgesagten park," "It breathes the autumn. Indeed it is the autumn" (P2 81); in the same way, "Terzinen II" attempts not to describe the experience of transience, but to *be* that experience, and so the undercurrent of all human experience, as we read it.

If this is the case, however, then why does Hofmannsthal use the verb "verstehn," which suggests a more or less abstract understanding, rather than "erleben," for example, or "erfassen"? And why "starren," which suggests an uncomprehending stare, if the self-forgetful movement of the poem is meant to enlighten us about our experience? The obvious alternative to "starren," especially with the syllables "-auen" ringing in our ears, is "schauen," which suggests a deep gaze developing into full comprehension.[4]

3

We must return to the idea of "understanding death," and recognize that such understanding, in any normal sense of the verb

"verstehn," is strictly impossible. Death, considered as the termination of our existence, is unthinkable; if we imagine it at all, then we imagine it as a *form* of existence, a country merely "undiscover'd," which immediately falsifies our thinking. In our experience of time we may undergo something like a foretaste of death; but if we "understand death," in the sense of either rational or imaginative comprehension, then we have managed to capture the reality of death in an enduring framework of ideas, which implies that we have not understood death after all, since death, as the cessation of our very self, is the opposite of anything enduring or capturable.

Or to look at it differently, death, in Hofmannsthal's youthful conceptual universe, is not only a termination but also the realization of the self's true Dionysian unity with all things, the casting off of the "veil of Maya" (A 106). Whenever we feel ourselves caught up "in the great round dance" (W3 71; G 209), in the totality and unity of existence, it is essentially death's power we feel, that "Hinüberfließen" into trees and grass which joins us to the whole of nature. But death is still not something we can "understand." We recall the cooperation of Servant and Doctor in *Das Kleine Welttheater*; no sooner do we grasp and affirm the unity of the self with all things than we also find ourselves in a position of analytic awareness with respect to it, and the process of analysis falsifies what it aims to comprehend. No sooner do we think about the infinite unity of self and world than (owing to the character of thinking as a process) we find ourselves thinking of it as a particular and distinguishable state of affairs, which is precisely what it is not.[5]

The crucial point, however, is that although an understanding of death is impossible, still we would not be able to receive even an intimation (in the experience of time) if we did not *attempt* to understand death. The experience of time, on which our awareness of mortality depends, depends in its turn on our ceaseless striving to hold it fast rationally. We could not feel the passage of time any more than we feel the spinning of the earth, if we did not resist it by conscious thought, by the attempt at *Verstehen*. If we could simply accept our mortality, surrender ourselves utterly to the passage of time, then time would no longer exist for us as an experience. But an intellectual resistance to the passage of time is already offered by our self-consciousness; whenever we say the word "I," we attempt to understand the self as an unchanging unit, since "I" has no meaning without a basic identity between what we are and what we have been. In saying "I," therefore, we struggle against time,

against that "uncanny forgetting from instant to instant," and precisely this struggle generates our experience of time, the uncanny alienness of our "ego of yesterday."

Or from a different point of view, self-consciousness, as an intellectual resistance against time, is a constant struggle to *overcome* death. But this very struggle generates our experience of transience, so that mortality is now an inescapable element of our experience. Death is therefore now part of the object of self-consciousness, which means that self-consciousness includes the attempt to *understand* death, to lay hold of it intellectually, to grasp it without resisting it, as is suggested in the image of staring meditatively out to sea. But this attempt is itself the movement by which self-consciousness becomes a resistance against time and mortality, against its own object. Therefore we never achieve either an understanding or an overcoming of death, even though our mode of existence necessarily entails the attempt to achieve both.

This is the insoluble problem of human being. Even in "those hours" – the noun "Stunden" contains the whole paradox, by referring to time while recalling etymologically the concept of stasis – even when we succeed in reconciling ourselves to death, even when we gaze at the deepening blue of the sea and feel ourselves ebbing away sympathetically, we are still inevitably conscious of what we are doing; and this self-consciousness is inevitably a form of resistance to our transience or mortality, a resistance without which we would not be experiencing that quality in the first place. Hence the verb "verstehn." There is no such thing as an immediate experience of death (the very word "Erleben" says it in German); the apparent intensity or immediacy of experience, in "those hours," is practically a mathematical function of that conscious resistance to time which is in truth mere "Verstehen," therefore false. The rapt gaze by which we lose ourselves in the infinite vision of the sea thus turns out to be only a dull, uncomprehending "Starren," not a "Schauen" after all. And yet, again, precisely this endless incomprehension, the collapse of experience into understanding, of "Schauen" into "Starren," the repeated failure to achieve contact with death intellectually, *is* the experience of mortality.

Self-conscious existence, by its very structure, is the attempt on our part to resist or overcome death by understanding, "Verstehen," which attempt is doomed to fail; but this failure *is* our experience of transience and death, so that we in a sense do

understand. This paradox is exactly parallel to the paradox of the little girl. Precisely by virtue of the artificial posturing that apparently sullies the genuineness of her experience of mortality, the little girl in truth finds herself more fully involved in that experience. The complexity of this interweaving of paradoxes perhaps seems out of proportion to the surface simplicity of the poem; but even the contrast of complexity and simplicity has communicative significance. The paradox of understanding death, again, must be acknowledged as an integral component of our normal experience in every instant, as an infinite complexity that informs even the simplest of our thoughts or conscious movements, not as the product of subtle reasoning or a heightened emotional state.

Let us consider, finally, the word "schlaftrunken," which ordinarily refers to the hazy feeling one has when one has just awakened. In the context of the poem, by contrast, the suggestion is not awakening from sleep so much as being about to go to sleep, or by implication to pass into the sleep of death.[6] But if falling asleep is also an image of submerging helplessly in the experience of transience, and if awakening is an image of conscious self-detachment, then the combination of the images in a single word asserts the identity of the ideas, and so expresses again the paradox of understanding death. We are also reminded of the paradoxical identity of sleep and waking at the end of *Der Tor und der Tod*.

4

The poem is thus constructed on a system of corresponding paradoxes. The paradox of understanding death, that only by detaching ourselves intellectually from the experience of our mortality do we actually undergo that experience, corresponds to the paradox of affectation and genuineness in the little girl and to the paradox in "schlaftrunken," that our conscious wakefulness is identical with the experience of constantly passing toward eternal sleep. But the crucial paradoxes in the system are those involving the reader. I argued above that the paradox of "sich zieren" produces a situation in which the reader is made aware that precisely by virtue of his intellectual detachment from the poem's evoked emotional world, he also undergoes an identification with the little girl of the image. This is a form of what we may call the governing paradox: that the reader enters magically into the poem's experience not by transcending his intellectual detachment but by exercising it. The poem attempts not to describe the

experience of mortality but to *be* that experience in movement; the system of paradoxes, however, enforces the reader's participation in this movement only by way of his detached critical understanding. In that we "understand" clearly, by concepts, what the poem says about our relation to death (the argument above), we are made aware that we also necessarily fail to understand; and this combination of understanding and failure, in its turn, *is* our magical participation in the verbal movement. Or in a perhaps more economical terminology, the poem effects a deconstruction of the relation between presence and absence, between speech and writing. Presence, immediacy, direct participation in the language as experience, is not in truth a fundamental reality of which the written poem is a mere record, but rather a function of the inevitability of absence, of the poem as writing and our situation as mere readers.[7]

Hence the inadequacy of the idea of a "language of life." Hofmannsthal's poetic technique does not entail the attribution of an overriding value or reality to such language, by contrast with ordinary language. Fortunio's rhapsody on his wife in *Der weiße Fächer* is not the objective statement of a real possibility but the subjectively conditioned illusion of a dramatic character. I have argued that Hofmannsthal rejects the possibility of actually transcending self-consciousness, and my contention now is exactly parallel: that for Hofmannsthal the poetic is based on a refusal to be deluded about the possibility of transcending conceptual language, or transcending language as writing. There is no such transcendence. The reader, even of a poem, always responds to language by way of a detached conceptual understanding. Poetic "magic," if it is to be achieved, must make use of this detached relation to language, as it does in "Terzinen II," rather than pretend to jump over it.

The opening of "Terzinen II," the assumption that the reader already understands the speaker's meaning, is thus not dishonest after all, but merely shows the practical side of Hofmannsthal's conviction that "the understanding of intellectual art must be purchased with the living of life, with the weariness of both its depths and its heights" (PI 267). For the language of poetry is not in any essential respect different from language in its other uses; the poem aims simply to *be* language, in such a way as to bring into focus what is always the quality of our verbally conditioned experience anyway. The magic of poetry is not an elevation of the soul above normal existence, but the revelation of what is always

inherent *in* our existence. We are always self-conscious, and our self-consciousness is always by nature both an intellectual struggle against mortality and the source of our experience of mortality; the poem "Terzinen II," by its movement and by our detachment from it, merely exercises this aspect of our existence, intensifies it, brings it into focus. Poetry, that is, does not teach us something about life which we understand by reading. On the contrary, we understand poetry *by* living, by experiencing the abysses and pinnacles of the human condition. Only by *having* feared death and struggled with the confusion of self-consciousness can we "read" the enactment and transfiguration of that experience in the rôle we are obliged to play as readers of the "Terzinen." The magic of poetry arises not from a transcendence of the act of reading in the direction of experienced intensity, but from a reduction of all our experience and memory *to* the act of reading, from a deconstruction of that delusive hierarchy of experiential immediacy on which the whole idea of a transcendence of conceptual language, or a transcendence of mere reading, is based.

The technique of magical poetry is therefore no technique at all, or at most a form of restraint, the choice of "verstehn" over a verb of greater emotional charge, the choice of "starren" over "schauen." Magical poetry need only realize what is already there in the operation of language, need only reveal that the opposition between a supposed deadening of experience by concepts and a supposedly deeper communication by poetry is itself merely a kind of poetic convention, a fruitful problem or tension, an opening of space for linguistic play.

> Two sacred tasks: the dissolution and the formation of concepts; the latter[!] is magical, an approach to God. – Orphic service. (A 104)

If my argument on the use of our accustomed conceptual understanding in "Terzinen II" is valid, then the idea of a magical "formation of concepts" cannot refer to strictly new concepts. As applied to poetry, this note from 1893 must mean that while our conventional response to poetry includes the idea of a "dissolution of concepts" in favor of sheer sympathy or intensity of experience, still the effect of this expectation is to provide a context in which our *accustomed* conceptual understanding ("formation of concepts") is itself revealed as a sovereign human act, a convention, a choice, a quotidian magic. Magical poetry, then, is an adjustment of language so as to play off convention against convention and so reveal in language *as such* a godlike generating force with respect to

articulated reality, a force that locates our own being in what appear to us as givens or externals. "Wollen wir uns finden, so dürfen wir nicht in unser Inneres hinabsteigen: draußen sind wir zu finden, draußen" (P2 82–3).

There is still a problem here, however, comparable to the problematic intrusion of a desire for transcendence even into the affirmation of self-conscious finitude. For poetic language, if its aim is a revelation concerning language as such, must not deviate too radically from the forms we are accustomed to in ordinary linguistic commerce. Hence the immediately recognizable "conservative" quality of Hofmannsthal's lyric, by contrast with the formal experimentation of some of his contemporaries. But a clearly marked deviation from common linguistic practice is still necessary in order to invoke the interplay of conventions by which poetic revelation is made possible in the first place. And how shall the revelatory deviation of poetry – precisely to the extent that we experience it as revelatory – *avoid* presenting itself as a transcendence of the ordinary, a new form of language, a "language of life"? From the point of view of the individual's relation to language, this problem is strictly insoluble; but even in his early lyric phase, Hofmannsthal begins to work around it by means of the idea of community.

5

"Terzinen II" belongs to a cycle of at least three poems,[8] and the meaning of "Terzinen I: Über Vergänglichkeit" is paralleled by a diary note on the concept "Ich": "We are no more immediately *one* with our ego of ten years ago than with the *body* of our mother" (A 107). This idea, which leads toward the conclusion that "we are one with everything that is or ever was," is developed in the lines:

> Dann: daß ich auch vor hundert Jahren war
> Und meine Ahnen, die im Totenhemd,
> Mit mir verwandt sind wie mein eignes Haar,
>
> So eins mit mir als wie mein eignes Haar. (WI 45; G 17)

Then: that I also existed a hundred years ago, and that my forebears in their shrouds are as related to me as my own hair, as one with me as my own hair.

The point is that it is impossible to set limits to the extent of the ego. If it is true that my ego of yesterday concerns me as little as the ego of Napoleon or Goethe, then it is equally true that the ego of

Napoleon or Goethe concerns me *as much* as my own ego. Where shall I say that "I" cease and the rest of the world begins? At my ego of yesterday or of ten years ago? At my body, or my mother's, or my ancestors'? At Napoleon or Goethe? If I exclude all of these things, then I am left with nothing but my uncapturable mood in the extensionless present, which is to say, with nothing whatever. But if I include some of these things in "myself," then what excuse have I for not including them all? If the ego exists in the first place, then ultimately "we are one with everything."

This idea sets the stage for the "we" with which "Terzinen II" opens, and gives the second poem's system of paradoxes a metaphysical dimension. The experience of transience in the first poem, the ego's lack of finite or empirical unity, leads to the idea of a universal or Dionysian ego, which in turn implies that ultimately there is no distinction between the poem's speaker and its reader. Hence the confident "we" in the second poem, where the unity of speaker and reader is then developed by a paradox; in the very process of understanding the poem critically, we discover that our critical detachment is itself a direct involvement in the poem's experience. The effect of the first poem is to interpret (by anticipation) this paradoxical, magical involvement as an intimation not only of our mortality but also of our Dionysian unity with all things, our divinity; we find ourselves as it were imitating Christ, the god who undergoes death. This is what I called in Chapter I the paradox of the soul: that in order to be the one infinite entity it truly is, the soul must also be divided against itself and so take on a finite, mortal existence.

This understanding of the first two poems, however, makes it difficult to understand the third, which appears much more objective, much more a poetry of statement, and in fact opens not with an evocation of experience but with a reference to literature, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on" (W I 48: G 18). The idea is by now familiar to us – that the shape of our existence, our finite identity and transience and mortality, is in truth a mental event, a kind of dream – and is then allegorized in the image of "little children under cherry trees." Given the image of the little child in "Terzinen I," who was once "my own ego," the little children of "Terzinen III" evidently represent the plurality of dreamt selves, "egos of yesterday," out of which our past is formed, whereupon the organic metaphor of fruit trees leads the eye upward toward the full moon in its solitary splendor: the suggestion being that our confused, dreamlike, transient existence, our existence as a plural-

ity, is itself the natural root from which our ultimately unified and as it were celestial being arises. Hence, again, the paradox of the soul, plurality and unity, the particular and the universal.

The symbolically decipherable meaning of "Terzinen III" is thus more or less what we would expect. But how shall we deal with the speaker's attitude, his objectivity and relative abstractness, his literary allusiveness, his use of allegory, rather than symbols in "the element of movement"? In "Terzinen II" the figure of the speaker practically vanishes, swept up in the magically realized union of speaker and reader; but now the speaker as distinct from the reader returns and asserts himself strongly. If the thought of "Terzinen III" is the same as in the other two poems, what are we to make of this *person*, this distinctly "other" individual, who now intrudes into the realm of the universal Dionysian ego?

It seems to me that the awakening of just this question is the poetic effect of the device, and that the result is the addition of a *social dimension* to the whole. The question raised by the intrusion of a detached speaker in this magical context is the whole question of our relation to other humans. Our involvement in the paradox of the soul, as encouraged by magical poetry, is a ceaselessly developing involvement in ourselves, and so necessarily reveals us to ourselves as "eternally lonely" (WI 44; G16) even in the overcoming of our alienation from universal oneness. How shall we now deal with individuals who are clearly distinct from ourselves? An answer to this question is suggested by the poem's last line, "Und drei sind Eins: ein Mensch, ein Ding, ein Traum," "And three are One: a person, a thing, a dream." We are a composite entity. Every human being includes something describable as "Das Innerste," "the inmost," an ego comparable to my own and ultimately coextensive with the whole world; every person, by being "ein Mensch," by the paradox of the soul, is the center of a complete universe. But at the same time, every person as I perceive him (including myself as I perceive myself) is also "ein Ding," a particular and limited object *in* the world.[9] And it is this coincidence of irreconcilable opposites that gives not only to my own being, but also to other people's, the vivid, yet indefinable character of a dream. Thus the Three are One; and the Trinity, hence the coincidence of opposites in Christ, mortal god and immortal man, at once both the source and the victim of existence, is also invoked.[10]

The important point, however, in view of the insistent alterity of the speaker, is that these ideas apply to other people in exactly the

same way as to ourselves. Other individuals, if we recognize in them not only objects but also egos like ours, become reflections of our own paradoxical being; and it follows that even *social* existence operates as an exploration of our own "inexhaustible" soul. Or to look at it differently, the paradox of the soul includes the requirement that we acknowledge a substantial reality in which our existence exhausts itself as a finite part; and this requirement cannot be fulfilled except in society. Only by acknowledging a "self" in others do we project a point of view from which our own person is seen to participate fully in the world of things; otherwise the relation between our inexhaustible soul and the world of things is merely that of infinite to finite, which diminishes the real and initiates a Kleistian insistence upon transcendence. Thus, even by being the statement of a person clearly other than ourselves, poetry operates to bring into focus the mystery of our own experience. And the overall plan of the three "Terzinen" poems now becomes clear; the first sets the stage for the identification of speaker and reader in the second, and it is against the background of this identification that the speaker's otherness in the third assumes significance.

But the idea of the social is not fully developed in "Terzinen I–III," and there is some indication that Hofmannsthal felt this as a lack. The poem "Terzinen IV" turns on the image of certain "niegeliebte Frauen" (WI 46; G 75), "women never loved," who are introduced "in a dream as little girls," whereby the governing images of the second and third poems are combined. And the structure of "Terzinen IV" recalls that of "Terzinen II": an independent clause with compound predicate followed by a subordinate clause ("Als wären sie ...") that then includes a compound subordinate clause ("Indess ...") which occupies the remaining eleven lines and itself concludes with a relative clause depending on a noun in its sixth and last member. Again we are invited into the movement of the language, into a kind of grammatical cascade, the culmination of which, however, is now not an understanding of death but an intimation of life *beyond* the condition of little girls, "das grosse Leben" in all its "glory and severity" ("Herrlichkeit und Strenge"). The verbal movement is now meant to carry us *beyond* the limits of the self-referred self, but in a manner that is not yet clear in the text as it stands. If "Terzinen IV" was really meant, at some stage in Hofmannsthal's thinking, to follow "Terzinen III,"[11] then a further development must have been envisaged.

Two points enable us to speculate on the direction of that

development: first, that while the little girl in the garden is characterized by her individual condition, the "niegeliebte Frauen" are (in these introductory words) characterized *socially*, as nowhere fixed in the network of relations by which society takes shape; and second, the proximity, in date of composition, of the four-stanza version of "Wo ich nahe, wo ich lande . . ." (WI 47, 236–8; G 74, 521–2) in which the *poet* is imagined as sharing his vision in various places, but fixed nowhere. The thought in this last poem is closely related to that of the "Terzinen," especially the idea that poetry reveals a mystery in our normal experience: "An den Dingen die sie kennen / lehr ich sie geheimes nennen." And I think it is reasonable to infer that Hofmannsthal's intent was to develop the "Terzinen" toward an idea of the poet as person (as "other" for the reader) in a specific social rôle.

This plan, however, if it existed, was not carried out. In fact it is years before Hofmannsthal comes to grips with the problem of the poet in society, and in the meantime his idea of the social develops with his use of drama as a form. But still it is clear that even in 1894 he is growing aware of the limits of lyric. I have already argued that it is precisely the thinking behind his lyric technique that eventually leads him toward a more mimetic conception of his art, an idea of poetry not as penetration of the reader's individual soul, but as the presentation of recognizable images to a group.

3
THE SMALLEST WORLD THEATER

I will try to round off my argument on Hofmannsthal's lyric by correlating its metaphysical, linguistic and social aspects in the discussion of a single short text. The main theoretical question I will raise is that of the mysterious moment of silence before a poem's speaking begins.[1] My point is that for Hofmannsthal the idea of the poem as a piece of writing is not inconsistent with the idea of its unfolding as a kind of drama, and that this combination of qualities creates problems that then reverberate in the theory of drama itself.

I

With reference to my argument concerning Hofmannsthal's refusal to attempt a transcendence of conceptual language, the reader may be tempted to quote from "Poesie und Leben," a text I used in support of that argument:

> There is no path leading from poetry into life or from life into poetry. The word as bearer of a life-content and the corresponding dreamlike word [das traumhafte Bruderwort] that can be used in a poem strain apart from each other and swing past each other unheeding, like the two buckets in a well ... The immediate relation to life is excluded from art not by any law but by simple impossibility: these heavy things [of "life"] cannot live in art any more than a cow can live in the treetops. (PI 263–4)

In order to deal with the apparently strict distinction here between the language of poetry and that of life, we might go ahead a few years to the aphoristic study "Bildlicher Ausdruck":[2]

> every poetic work, through and through, is a structure composed of nonliteral expressions ... The case of language in general is no different; but of all speakers only poets remain unceasingly conscious of the figurative quality of language. (PI 286)

The lightness of words in poetry (which is "a weightless web of words" [PI 263]), as opposed to the heaviness of "the word as

bearer of a life-content," resides in their metaphorical character. But the metaphoricity of language is not exclusively the domain of poetry; the poetic quality is a special consciousness of the metaphorical nature of *all* language. Poetic language is different only by being more fully self-aware *as* language. This thought reaffirms my argument above, while also pointing in the direction of the more advanced view of language developed later in "Der Dichter und diese Zeit."[3]

The passages quoted above, however, taken in combination, also suggest an understanding of the metaphoricity of language, which poetry exploits, as a form of *lightness*, hence an understanding of language in general as a kind of game; and in the wake of this understanding, even the supposed heaviness of real life, outside art, cannot survive as more than a fleeting illusion. Lord Chandos later learns to his cost that by taking language too seriously, by expecting too much from it, we endanger the cohesion of our very existence. But this insight is not new for the poet of the "Terzinen" or the "Ballade des äußeren Lebens" ("diese Spiele" [W1 44; G 16]), or of works like *Das Kleine Welttheater* and *Der weiße Fächer*, with their sense of life itself as ultimately a mere play or game that must be taken lightly.

This idea of language and of life as mere playing or play-acting, which we will return to with *Der Tor und der Tod*, is an important factor that moves Hofmannsthal's early thinking in the direction of drama as a genre and the world-theater image. Even the "Terzinen" are a mental drama in which the reader is expected to take a definite rôle, since his situation as detached reader is part of the meaning; even the de-dramatization of poetry – in the sense of a refusal to privilege some supposed vitally immediate language over language as writing – thus still produces an essentially dramatic situation. Drama is never far from the center of Hofmannsthal's poetic endeavor, and my point now is that this assertion applies not only to the persona-poems and little dramas classified as "Gestalten" in the 1911 edition, and not only to those of the "Gedichte" in which a special sense of grammatical or emotional kinesis is produced, but even to what is perhaps the most direct and lapidary of Hofmannsthal's lyric utterances, if also an especially obscure one, the little poem entitled:

REISELIED

Wasser stürzt, uns zu verschlingen,
Rollt der Fels, uns zu erschlagen,
Kommen schon auf starken Schwingen
Vögel her, uns fortzutragen.

Aber unten liegt ein Land,
Früchte spiegelnd ohne Ende
In den alterslosen Seen.

Marmorstirn und Brunnenrand
Steigt aus blumigem Gelände,
Und die leichten Winde wehn. (WI 84; G II)

TRAVELLING SONG: Water falls, to engulf us; the boulder topples, to crush us; already, on strong wings, birds come to bear us off. But down there is a land, mirroring fruits without end in its ageless lakes. Marble brow and fountain-rim rise from the flowered terrain, and light winds blow.

My point is that this poem is in effect a miniature *teatro del mundo*.

2

What disturbs us first in the "Reiselied" is that the peril suggested at the beginning is never in any sense explained. There is a hint, as in Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meister*, of rough, mountainous terrain,[4] but no really visualizable scene or action is presented. The sight of a boiling mountain stream might perhaps awaken in us a momentary sense of the precariousness of our existence, but this possibility does not justify the idea of our being swallowed. In "Mignon" the sense of danger is made to arise from a clearly imagined situation, the mule picking its way blindly along a mountain path, which is not the case in Hofmannsthal's first line, where no scene has been set. In fact, if we desire a parallel in Goethe, it makes as much sense to recall the image of the cascade and the rainbow in *Faust II* (lines 4716–19). If we interpret Goethe's image as Hofmannsthal himself apparently did – "Wie der wesenlose Regenbogen spannt sich unsere Seele über den unaufhaltsamen Sturz des Daseins" (P2 83) – then the "Reiselied" perhaps begins to make sense, since "the irresistible downward plunge of existence" does imply a threat to swallow us up. But still, there is no clear basis in Hofmannsthal's text, as there is in Goethe's, for this interpretive move. In order to understand where the sense of danger comes from in the "Reiselied," in order to understand specifically how the speaker of the poem is endangered, we must think of the text as a dramatic speech and ask what sort of act is implied by its existence, what the speaker is doing in that he speaks. We must ask not *what* is being said, but what it means *that* the opening lines of the poem are spoken, and the answer to this question hinges on the use of the word "uns," "us."[5]

The word "we" in poetry, unless its range of reference is limited by the context, lays special emphasis upon the communicability of what is being said; it entails the assumption that the poet's experience or knowledge is shared by the reader. Therefore its use requires special care, for from the point of view of poetry, communication is surely always a *problem*; we assume, or our tradition assumes, that the poet makes much greater demands on language than other speakers. And it is clear from "Die gesammelten Gedichte" of 1911 that Hofmannsthal does exercise care with the concept "we." The word occurs frequently enough, in "Weltgeheimnis," "Ballade des äußeren Lebens," "Terzinen II, III," "Ein Traum von großer Magie," and the second song "Im Grünen zu singen." But in none of these poems – except "Im Grünen zu singen," where it is limited to the lovers, and provided the "Terzinen" are meant to be read together as a cycle – does it occur at the very beginning. A clear and compelling mood is always established, which provides an anticipatory justification for the "wir"; it is our presumed participation, with the poet, in the poem's mood, that we suppose makes communication possible, or at least the idea of communication.[6] This is not the case in the "Reiselied," however, and it is therefore by no means obvious why this poem does not at least *begin* with the same first-person singular as in, say, "Erlebnis," "Gute Stunde," "Dein Antlitz. . . ," "Manche freilich . . . " or "Ein Traum von großer Magie."

The word "uns," as it first occurs in the "Reiselied," seems to have neither a specific nor a general reference. The first line shows no conventional form of appeal to the reader or humanity in general, and the idea of a small party of travelers in the mountains requires an extended reflection on the poem as a whole.[7] To explain the opening line from the poem as a whole, however, especially in Hofmannsthal, is often to miss an important subtlety. The opening of "Terzinen I," for example, "Noch spür ich ihren Atem auf den Wangen," is seen in the next line to refer to "their" breath, the breath of "diese nahen Tage"; but in the first line as we read it by itself, the impression of "her" breath is actually much stronger, and the resulting suggestion of a love-affair just terminated adds a significant dimension. Or when we read, "Manche freilich müssen drunten sterben, / Wo die schweren Ruder der Schiffe streifen" (WI 54; G 19), it must first occur to us that the "Manche" are those who at least figuratively are submerged in the sea, the universal chaotic element. Only by contrast with those others "bei dem Steuer droben," and by the opposition

"Steuer" / "Ruder," is the image of galley-slaves in a ship's bowels suggested.

Simply to identify the "uns" as a small party of travelers, therefore, is an interpretive short-cut. We must come to grips with the opening line of the "Reiselied" *as* an opening line, which means we must understand that while it is not easy to regard the "uns" as referring to all humanity, including ourselves, still it is necessary that we do so, for there is no alternative. If the poem were in the past tense, suggesting narration, a narrow interpretation of the "uns" would be called for; but in the text as it stands we must read the word as having its conventional general reference. And yet there is still no justification for this universal "uns." What the speaker is doing here, in other words – and with this we come to our main question – is not *referring* to a communicable experience, but rather *arbitrarily asserting* the communicability of the experience he is about to articulate. Or to put it more generally, the use of the word "uns" here expresses the arbitrary assertion that there is such a thing as communicable experience, that our existence is not entirely contained within a unique and transient individuality, that there is something in us which, like the rainbow, arches "over the irresistible plunge of existence." Communication cannot occur, the words "uns" is meaningless, if there is not such a thing as humanity in a generic and eternal sense which at once includes and surpasses our existence as individuals.

At the beginning of the "Reiselied," then, this universal "we" within which communication can happen is asserted arbitrarily in the face of something that then reveals itself as danger; and I contend that precisely this arbitrary assertion of communicability is what *brings about* the sense of danger in the poem. If we could somehow commit ourselves unreflectingly to "the plunge of existence," if we did not insist on a more-than-individual aspect of our existence, then existence would not appear dangerous to us. We would be reconciled, as we imagine animals are, to our transience.[8] The animal fears certain particular things, but (we assume) it does not fear death as such; the sight of a cascading mountain stream does not remind it of its mortality. Yeats says, "Nor dread nor hope attend / A dying animal; / A man awaits his end / Dreading and hoping all." Dread and hope go together, for there would be no dread, the world would not be dangerous, if we did not hope, if we did not seek to realize our eternal being, the "uns" that includes and outlasts the mere individual.

The basic pattern of thought in the first section of the "Reiselied"

is thus the same as that in "Der Jüngling und die Spinne."[9] A vision of supra-individual being – "Ich bin von einem solchen großen Leben / Umrahmt" – leads necessarily to a confrontation with death, with the fundamental dangerousness of existence. Or we think of the speech of the artisan in *Das Kleine Welttheater*, whose striving to realize in manifest form the "Ein-Wesen" (W3 140; G 306), "One-Essence," of all possible human existence involves him in the struggle with a dark, destructive power that (as in the "Reiselied") has the nature of water. Again, man is the creature who for no obvious reason is not content to be merely a creature, but asserts his more-than-individual being, therefore fears death, and in effect creates the dangers among which he lives. In particular, it is the speaking of the word "uns" by the poet – which invokes the eternal by way of the communal and so also engages the argument above on the social in poetry – that brings about the atmosphere and symbolism of danger in the "Reiselied."

It may be objected that this argument contradicts that of Chapters 1 and 2 by privileging spoken language, considered as an act, over the written text. But this contradiction is actually a paradox that establishes precisely the reversibility of any relation of privilege between speaking and writing. For as an arbitrary assertion of our more-than-individual being, the word "uns" derives its force only from the *absence* of the speaker, hence the quality of writing, the detachment of the reader. The gulf of impossibility encountered by precisely the conceptualizing reader, when he faces the problem of applying the word "uns" to himself, is the only type of space in which the "uns" *can* operate as an arbitrary assertion. If the speaker were in any sense present, the result would be an articulated *situation* in which the "uns" would become more or less clearly referential, not arbitrary at all. But I do not want to repeat myself unnecessarily. My concern is to show the relations, in Hofmannsthal's thought and technique, among lyric writing, the practice of actual drama, and the idea of the world-theater.[10]

3

Let us take a closer look at the poem and note that its opening section can be read in two entirely different ways, depending on how seriously we take the inversions in lines 2 and 3. Given the sense of compressed significance in the language, it is easy enough to regard these not as inversions at all, but as ellipses: "Rollt der Fels" for "Es rollt der Fels," "Kommen schon" for "Es kommen

schon," in which case we have a series of three direct statements. But it is also possible to read "Rollt der Fels" as a condition, with "Kommen schon" as the result ("if the boulder tumbles to crush us, then, on strong wings, birds are already coming to carry us away"), so that the birds are not part of the danger but an agency that removes us from danger. The ambiguity in the syntax thus becomes an ambiguity in the symbol of the birds, the suggestion of either threat or rescue.

No matter which way we understand the syntax, however, each of the three clauses is still composed of the same succession of three elements: first a statement (or condition) concerning nature or a natural event, then the word "uns," and finally an infinitive expressing a purpose of which "uns" is the object. This pattern expresses graphically what I have already said. Nature may in some sense exist and operate separately from us (initial statement), but it is only by virtue of our arbitrary assertion of ourselves in the midst of nature (like the "uns" in the middle of each clause) that nature takes on purpose (closing infinitive); and this purpose, to destroy or control us, is revealed to us as danger, a danger to the ultimately metaphysical being that we have asserted.

This interpretation of the syntactic pattern is then borne out by the content of the images. The words "Wasser stürzt" can be taken to refer to a mountain stream or cascade. But in view of what we have observed about first lines, it must also be recognized that the words in themselves, considered as a simple statement, express a *general truth* about nature; water, after all, does fall. What is invoked here is thus nature itself, as helpless and purposeless flux, which makes the conclusion "to swallow us" intelligible; if nature as such is mere flux or watery chaos, it follows that the tendency of nature with respect to the human mind – whose existence is an articulation of experienced flux into structure – must be to obliterate it, to swallow it up. The opening words of the poem may therefore be said to represent the awakening of the human mind in a nature as yet entirely unaffected by its presence. But the very speaking of the words "Wasser stürzt," which describe that primal nature as watery chaos, is also already an act of articulation, already reduces mere flux to an intelligible pattern or natural law, thus already asserts man's separateness or dominion relative to nature, and so logically anticipates the assertive or hopeful "uns" and the fear of obliteration. The first line of the poem becomes a dramatic enactment of the birth of mankind, and of nature's assumption of her original purpose, to obliterate mankind. (Once

again, there is no conflict here with the idea of lyric writing. The setting represented by the moment of silence before the speaking of the "Reiselied" is pure chaos – or undifferentiated plenitude, unity of word and object, which comes to the same thing[11] – thus not a *situation* that might support a referential act. The words "Wasser stürzt" are strictly arbitrary *by* referring to an unarticulated chaos where precisely reference is not yet a possibility.)

But the original purpose of nature, the purpose that primal chaos assumes by virtue of man's appearance, can never be achieved, for purpose implies order. The very existence of purpose (even the purpose of obliterating mankind) is itself essentially a human phenomenon, provided we continue to understand mankind, "uns," as the assertion of articulated order in the midst of a nature that would otherwise be undifferentiated flux or chaos. Hofmannsthal's early note on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, a book that by way of Mignon already belongs in the intellectual vicinity of the "Reiselied," concludes: "Form the Sustainer; world = chaos captured, preserved in forms" (A 127). The allusion to the Uncle's speech in Book VI of *Meister*, on "world" as a kind of unhewn stone presented to the human "architect,"[12] suggests the idea of "Formen" as the forms imposed on nature by human intellect and creativity. But what the Uncle calls "Element," Hofmannsthal calls "Chaos" and so implies that the very existence of the world depends on human articulation; there is no such thing as world except by virtue of mankind's intellectual and verbal self-assertion. Everything that in any way exhibits form testifies to the creative presence of mankind, and this applies even to the forces that tend to destroy us, for they too participate in the shapedness of existence. We recall, from Chapter I, the idea of man's own generating of the forces that oppose or endanger him.

The original purpose assumed by nature, to obliterate us utterly, cannot be achieved, for the existence of purpose is the existence of man. Even if the wheel of time (suggested by the "rolling" of the rock) moves inexorably toward our destruction, still there are huge birds already on their way to rescue us. The meaning of the bird-symbol is clarified by the epigram "Dichter und Gegenwart" (WI 86; G 88),[13] in which the poet is appalled at having to be not only the "wing" that supports the bird of time "over chaos," but also the "claw" by which, presumably, that bird carries others. And the completion of this image in the "Reiselied," where the speaker also belongs to the "uns" that are carried, is paralleled in the epigram on "Dichtkunst," "Poetic Art":

Fürchterlich ist diese Kunst! Ich spinn' aus dem Leib mir den Faden,
Und dieser Faden zugleich ist auch mein Weg durch die Luft.
(WI 86)

This art is outrageous! I spin the thread out of my own body, and this thread is also my path through the air.

Carrier and carried are the same. We are borne aloft over the "plunge of existence" by our own articulating activity, which has now itself become an integral part of nature as we experience it. The symbol of the birds, in its aspect of rescue, has exactly the same source as the atmosphere of danger; it is brought into existence by the act of speaking the poem's opening lines, by articulate human self-assertion in the face of primal chaos.

It is also possible, however, to regard the birds as part of the danger, and in this reading the first section of the poem alludes to the image of Prometheus bound; the idea of watery flux (Oceanus and the nymphs in Aeschylus), the image of a huge rock (like the one to which Prometheus is chained), and the birds of prey (corresponding to Zeus' eagles) are all present. But the idea of the Promethean certainly includes, for Hofmannsthal, the idea of "the inevitability of offense [Frevel] imposed on the titanically striving individual," which Nietzsche explains as follows:

The individual, in his heroic advance toward the general, in his attempt to overstep the hallowed limits of individuation and himself become the *one* world-being, suffers in his own person the primal contradiction inherent in existing things; that is, he transgresses and suffers.[14]

With certain allowances for tone, this passage practically summarizes the "Reiselied." By striving beyond the limits of his individual existence, by asserting himself in opposition to the plunge of existence, by articulating into order, thus violating ("freveln") the original unity of all things, man brings about for himself a dangerous world in which he is doomed to suffer. If only I were a mute animal among unnamed things, says Sigismund to Clotald in *Das Leben ein Traum*, and inveighs especially against the "fürchterliche Kunst" of rational thought (D3 376). This is the same "dread art" spoken of in the epigram "Dichtkunst," an art to which, as soon as we begin to practice it, as soon as we say "uns," we are as utterly committed as the spider is to her web, an art that becomes our very being, and from the standpoint of which nature must reveal itself as opposition and danger.

Even if we regard all three images in the first section as belonging

to the category of danger, however, the ambiguity of the bird-symbol still makes itself felt, for there is a suggestion of salvation or resolution in the *progression* of images. Whereas the words "Wasser stürzt" express a general truth and can be taken as describing original chaos, the rolling of the huge rock presupposes a nature that has solidified and taken on form, a world in which the danger is no longer that we will be utterly obliterated, but that we will be struck down at a particular place; and the birds then represent a nature that has been not only articulated but animated. The progression from water to huge rocks to birds of prey enacts the organization of chaos and its awakening into life, a process that is described frequently in Hofmannsthal's notes as the function of poetry in the world.[15] The shape in which danger appears reflects progressively the presence of mankind in nature, the influence of the articulating consciousness that speaks the poem, and it follows once again that the original purpose with which our presence endows nature, to destroy us, cannot be carried out. In the very process of seeking to destroy us, nature assumes a form that *confirms* our existence, by being form. Hence the final phrase "uns fortzutragen," which no longer necessarily implies obliteration or death. Like Prometheus, we no longer really die at all, since our life is realized in the animatedness of the whole world. Our death is now merely the flow of life from one place to another, a "Hinüberfließen" as in "Terzinen II."

4

Arbitrary human self-assertion as manifested in the act of speaking thus brings about the dangerousness of nature, which is then realized as the animation of nature, and finally *accomplishes the eternity of human being*. Our being is now no longer limited by our individuality, but lives in the whole fabric of things; the word "uns" assumes a real and universal meaning. We might compare the opening of *Das Kleine Welttheater*. The Poet has just risen from his bath, and from his vantage point on the bridge (lifted above the water by human contrivance, like time above chaos by poetic articulation) he looks back at the fluvial landscape and discovers that it is bursting with the activity, the adventures, the battles and idylls, of anthropomorphic spirits. As in the "Reiselied," man articulates chaos into world by detaching himself from the primal watery element, and immediately discovers a nature animated by human existence.

Man the speaker automatically calls forth nature as opposition and danger; but this opposition, as a type of order, is itself a confirmation of human existence, so that man and nature are in accord, not really opposed after all. The original act of speaking which is the "Reiselied" therefore implies directly not only the danger-images of the quatrain, but the paradise of the first tercet as well. Nature now bears fruit that is reflected in ageless waters; the dynamic articulation of speaking is now realized as the articulatedness of reflection, and primal water now represents not nature as flux, but the agency of reflection, the mind. Chaos has been "rescued" in intellectual form; only by way of the reflective human articulation of chaotic unity into eternal shape does nature achieve existence and bear fruit. This idea is developed further in the last tercet by the suggested image of a fountain with a statue of thinking man (his "brow") at its center, around which the flower-garden of nature arranges itself, whereby we are also reminded of the concentric circles of "Der Kaiser von China spricht." And the fountain also suggests water *rising* rather than falling, hence the idea of a complete transformation of nature.

But even though this vision of nature transfigured is a direct consequence of human being as represented by the act of speaking the poem, still we may not actually dwell in that happy land. As individuals we are still mortal, still in danger, and this is as it must be; *only* in the midst of danger and dread, the immediate consequences of our very being, can we become aware of, and so reflectively participate in, the eternal unity of nature and mankind. In "Ad me ipsum" there are two occurrences of the idea of "Tyche = the world that seeks to separate the individual from itself in order to bring him back to itself" (A 218, cf. A 222); we cannot be united with the world except by being separated from it. Or we think of *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*, where the emperor is obliged to break free from the intimate union with nature represented by his attachment to the witch, or of "Der Jüngling und die Spinne," where the youth, in order to realize his initial ecstatic vision, must affirm a world of brute force, danger and death.

Or to look at it another way, if nature were no longer dangerous, if we lived in that "land down there," we would no longer be able to envision it as from a mountain peak, we would not know it in such a way as to continue articulating it; if the unity of man and nature were wholly realized, then the word "uns," which distinguishes man and brings him into being, would become absolutely valid, but for just this reason also no longer speakable as a word, as an

articulating human act, and nature would once again be unified, unarticulated, unreflected, inhuman, mere chaos. Hence the image of transfigured nature as "down there" in the distance. It does not exist except in that we, each of us, like Prometheus, are sacrificed on the cliffs that overhang it. To the extent that we live *in* it, it becomes what the land "unten" is in ancient myth, the land of the dead.

But at the same time, the image of the wind in the last tercet, not a visual but a tactile sensation, suggests our actual presence in the imagined landscape. While it is true that the ultimate unity of nature and mankind must be paid for by our fear of death, still, by definition, we do in a sense actually live in transfigured nature; it is after all the world of articulate mankind. This knowledge, that our being is eternally reflected in the being of all things, must necessarily appear before us, as a symbolic vision arising directly from the speaking of the poem. The act of reading is in a sense equivalent to the state of being in paradise. The actual breezes of paradise are an integral part of the poem considered as *drama*, as the unfolding of a situation that originates in the character of the act by which the poem comes into being.

And yet the landscape in the last tercet is different from that in the one preceding. The fruits are replaced by flowers, fulfilment by the transient stage of beauty; the fragmentary description of the fountain with the statue suggests marble fragments jutting from the meadow, not a fountain but the ruins of a fountain; and the "light winds" not only suggest insubstantiality more than eternity, but precisely by *insisting* on our presence in the scene, they also remind us of our actual absence as readers. The idea of transience as opposed to fulfilment, of the particular or fragmentary as opposed to totality, is inevitable here. As soon as we imagine ourselves as participating directly in our vision of eternal human being, we falsify that vision, since our actual presence in eternity would exclude the component of chance or separation or danger without which transfigured nature cannot happen. The fruit eludes our grasp as soon as we reach for it; we live in the midst of transfigured nature but can never enjoy it. The myth of Tantalus, suggested by fruit hanging over water in an "underworld" (or even by the word "Stirn," which in German suggests "arrogance"), is not at all irrelevant. Our actually entering the vision, as in the last tercet, changes the character of the vision in the direction of transience, thus falsifies it as a vision of eternity. Our overcoming of the fear of death turns out to have been effected by those "blind hopes" the

eternal artist has filled us with.[16] For us as for the emperor Porphyrogenitus, as soon as communion with nature begins to become perfect, it also ceases to be wholly desirable.

Not only the bird-symbol but everything in the "Reiselied" partakes of a fundamental ambiguity, the "Basic problem: becoming and being" (A 226). Precisely our insistence upon experiencing eternity, our insistence upon the "uns," upon *being*, in that it necessarily confuses our vision and returns us to the images of *becoming* in the last tercet, also constitutes the Promethean sacrifice that makes our eternal being possible in the first place. The qualification of the vision at the end of the poem represents the uncertainty and suffering, the danger we *must* expose ourselves to, in order to achieve our being. It represents, as the quatrain does, those Alps we must always cross, and always be in the process of crossing, in order to reach the eternal Italy of our realized union with nature.

The act of speaking by which we assert ourselves necessarily leads to a vision of eternal human being that we cannot help but desire. We want to feel those breezes. In doing so, however, we lose hold of the true vision and are once again faced with our individual endangeredness, which losing-hold is in turn the sacrifice that makes eternity possible, so that the cycle is complete. The act of speaking that engenders this situation is thus at once both the assertion of our being and the Promethean suffering that establishes our being. What is visualized in the last tercet is the situation that arises *whenever* we speak: we find ourselves in the midst of transfigured nature, but only at the price of experiencing it as transience. Our existence is a "Reise," a constant moving on, even though we always are at our destination. And all of this, once again, grows for us out of the language considered as a developing dramatic action.

The cycle implied by this manner of reading the poem – the idea of the speaking-into-being of a world of terror which, by being experienced as such, becomes a kind of paradise which, by being experienced as such, plunges us back into time and terror, and so on – is thus neither a senseless nor a vicious circle; for its effect as a whole is to draw our attention to the quality of the silence that precedes its speaking, hence to the quality of the silence that precedes *all* speaking, to the question of what is at stake in our use of language. The general point from Chapter 2 above still holds, for the dramatization of language in the "Reiselied" does not attempt to transcend ordinary conceptual language, but rather transfigures

it, reveals what is in truth present in *all* our verbal activity. Again we are reminded of "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" and the idea of the poet's cultural "leadership" (P2 235), not his uniqueness, in language.

5

It is of interest, finally, that Hofmannsthal definitely knew a passage in Schopenhauer that suggests exactly the feeling for nature expressed in the "Reiselied." Schopenhauer remarks that "especially the vegetable kingdom invites aesthetic contemplation," because, "one is tempted to say ... these organisms, unlike animal bodies, are not the immediate object of knowledge and therefore require an external rational individual in order to leave the world of blind will and enter the world of appearance, an entrance they seem to long for."[17] The idea of a kind of desire, even in insentient nature, to participate somehow in human existence, is the idea of articulated nature as an answer to assertive human being, thus essentially a part of it.

If we recall, moreover, that the remark of Augustine's to which Schopenhauer in a footnote calls our (and Hofmannsthal's) attention belongs to the argument in *De Civitate Dei* that the Trinity is exactly imitated in human nature, "Nam et sumus et nos esse novimus et id esse ac nosse diligimus,"[18] then we can perhaps also understand better the tripartite structure of the "Reiselied." The opening quatrain develops from the assertive utterance of the word "uns"; it is a working out of the idea "sumus." The first tercet, in which transfigured nature, the true extent of our being, becomes visible or (metaphorically) knowable, performs the statement "nos esse novimus" and suggests strongly the second person of the Trinity, since it is our knowledge that for Hofmannsthal entails our Promethean or Christ-like sacrifice. And the second tercet is an affirmation ("diligimus") of both being and knowledge, in that it represents both an actual entrance into our ultimate envisioned being and an acceptance of the qualifications of the vision made necessary by our situation as knowers.

In any case, it is clear that the "Reiselied" unfolds in a fundamentally dramatic manner, that the ideas and images all belong to a developing poetic situation brought about by the act of speaking; and it is clear that the drama in question is a true world theater, that it encompasses and enacts existence as a whole, from aboriginal chaos to the beautiful but ambiguous world of mankind. In *Das*

Salzburger Große Welttheater, when the Meister desires to observe "a living, mysterious, free action," the Widersacher remarks, "I have never heard him speak of created things in this manner" (W10 11; D3 257), which disturbs us, for this play is not about the *beginning* of mankind in Adam and Eve but about *typical* mankind; the Meister himself reminds us of this when he addresses the Widersacher as "instigator since Eve's apple" (W10 13; D3 260). How can God never before have spoken of free creatures, if Adam and Eve already belong to the past? The resolution of this paradox is clearly the idea that human existence *begins anew* in every person and in every moment of life. And it is this sense of human existence as the constant birth of mankind, of human speech as the repeatedly originary act of world-articulation, that informs Hofmannsthal's smallest world theater, the "Reiselied." The speaking of the poem, which stands for all speaking, begins as it were nowhere, in sheer unformed chaos; and by the time the poem is finished, the whole six days' work, including man, has been spoken into being.

Or to return to the idea of language as metaphorical play, we recall the following passage from Goethe, which Hofmannsthal quotes in "Philosophie des Metaphorischen":

> Everything that we call invention or discovery in a higher sense is a revelation that unfolds from within us toward the outside, and an intimation of man's godlikeness. It is a synthesis of world and spirit, which offers blissful assurance of the eternal harmony of existence.[19] (P1 189)

In *our* creating, by metaphor, a verbal order in our existence, we are made aware that the order of metaphor is not merely artificial but a true reflection of our essential divinity ("Gottähnlichkeit"), of human consciousness or speech as the generating center of an ultimately harmonious world.

4
DEATH AND THE FOOLS

We now leave strict chronology behind, for *Der Tor und der Tod* antedates the major poems discussed above. There are probably as many ideas of Hofmannsthal's "decisive" turning point from lyric to drama as there are critics,[1] but my position is that no such turning point exists, that the intertwining of problems in lyric and drama as forms is effective in all the early works. The form of drama, for Hofmannsthal, in the very process of relieving certain tensions inherent in the practice of lyric poetry (or in the process of developing those tensions, depending on how we look at it), is beset by an unresolvable tension of its own, since it must accomplish two different tasks that do not agree with each other. It must *be* the metaphysical action by which world is spoken into being, and it must also be a resolute turning away from the metaphysical toward the mimetic. On one hand, the language of lyric poetry, even in its self-enclosed non-referentiality, gives rise to a chain of thought by which the poet is required to accept his finite, self-consciously fragmented condition as the basis for his art, which means he must reconceive his work in terms of mimetic rather than logical or structural considerations. "Die Gestalt erledigt das Problem" (P4 144). On the other hand, drama is also required by the problem of speech and writing, the metaphysical necessity that in poetry the language become strictly *action*. I have argued that only the poem as writing contributes that quality of arbitrariness without which a metaphysical action in language does not happen; only for the reader is the silence before the poem truly a nowhere, a chaos beyond space and time, whereas for the listener it becomes a particular situation, a point *in* time and space where the still silent speaker stands before us. But how shall the reader be prevented from taking the poem *only* as writing? How shall he be induced to embrace it as not only the poet's action, but also his own? Drama – in which the poetry *is* action, here and now, in the theater, and an action already embraced by the audience in their observance of the

conventions that make a dramatic ritual possible – offers the poet an opportunity to govern the reader's response in ways that a book cannot. And the problem, then, of how to maintain the spectator's status as a reader, how to ensure that it is still the *reader* whom one is addressing, not a mere theater-goer, hence the problem of how to maintain the metaphysical quality of the action of speech, is met (I will argue) by the awakening of an ironic reflection upon the question of what we are doing in the theater in the first place.[2]

I

Poetic language for Hofmannsthal is not primarily self-expression, but a mirror in which language as such and the creating genius of mankind are reflected with special intensity. Therefore all poetry has a social dimension, to the extent that the nature of language involves the nature of human community and communication; poetry is the center of culture, the unique point at which true community is realized. Even in our epoch of cultural disintegration, even "in the huge wilderness" of our cities (P2 239) where many individuals undergo the isolated fate of a Kaspar Hauser, even here it is poetry, says Hofmannsthal later, that still holds together "the scattering atoms" of our existence.

> It is by the power of language that the poet secretly rules a world whose individual members may deny him, may have forgotten his existence. It is he who combines and separates their thoughts, dominates and leads by the nose their imagination . . . Everything that is written in a language, or even (I venture to say) thought in it, is descended from the products of the few who have ever operated creatively with that language. (P2 239–40)

In earlier periods the yearning for true community had been expressed by the gesture of "a man kneeling with folded hands" (P2 237); in our period this yearning is expressed by the tireless and indiscriminate *reading* of the intellectually fragmented masses:

> for they seek from book to book what cannot be provided by the content of any of their thousands of books . . . They seek something that will connect them with the world more strongly than ever, yet also relieve them of the world's pressure. They seek an ego on whose bosom their own ego might find repose. In a word, they seek the whole magic of poetry. (P2 238–9)

The key idea is "verknüpfen," connection with something beyond one's own lonely individuality. Only poetry, whether acknowledged or not, effects this connection, by revealing and realizing the nature of language.

The germ of these ideas, however, is already present in early Hofmannsthal, which is why he is later so disturbed by others' perception of "an egoistic, aesthetic loneliness, an inhumane, unsympathetic nature" in his "first products" (A 152). Those works do contain a distinct egoism, in the sense of a concentration on internal problems of the soul. But at least as applied to the poet, it is not an anti-social egoism. For as we read in "Poesie und Leben," language in culture already has a natural tendency to degenerate, to become "false," which means that the poet, precisely in his radical originality, his insistence upon "his own tone" (P1 265), does not discard or undermine the native order of words, but rather *restores* language as a true communal possession. And in "Terzinen III" we observed the beginning of an attempt to bridge the gap between social and egoistic concerns with the suggestion that only *by* dealing with other individuals do we deal in truth with the mystery of the self. Or we read from 1895:

> When one falls in love with oneself and, in staring at one's reflection, falls into the water and drowns, as is told of Narcissus, one has, I think, fallen the best way ... "In love with oneself," I mean simply with life, or with God if you will. (H/EKvB, p. 83)

This is perhaps a youthfully subjective utterance, but it shows the earnest attempt to relate its subjectivity to "life."

Still, problems arise in the course of this attempt at a union of the egoistic and the social, problems connected with the nature of language, and we do not have to wait for the Chandos letter to find in Hofmannsthal an awareness of them. I will argue, in fact, that the essence of the Chandos crisis, and the central tension of Hofmannsthal's development, are already present in his earliest major work, *Der Tor und der Tod*.

2

How must we take Claudio's last speech, in which he apparently reconciles himself to dying? Is this speech meant to express something approaching the whole meaning of the play?[3] Ought we to expect the protagonist to come to terms with death in a manner sufficiently general for us to apply to ourselves? This expectation seems justified by Hofmannsthal's notes, where we read that Claudio is "cured," that there is a "truth" to be "grasped," and a "transfiguration" (W3 448; A 106). But does all this imply that Claudio's final speech, in any general sense, is *valid*?

Claudio not only feels, but argues for his feeling, that death and life are somehow interchangeable. And just this apparent reasoning process makes the speech suspect:

> Was zwingt mich, der ich beides nicht erkenne,
> Daß ich dich Tod und jenes Leben nenne?
> In eine Stunde kannst du Leben pressen,
> Mehr als das ganze Leben konnte halten,
> Das schattenhafte will ich ganz vergessen
> Und weih mich deinen Wundern und Gewalten.
> (W3 79; G 219–20)

If the proximity of death intensifies our vitality, how can a strict opposition between death and life be maintained? The trouble is that Claudio establishes his definitions of life and death on the premise of his own ignorance of them – since I know nothing of either one, what compels me to call death and life by their accustomed names? – which is more than just logically absurd.[4] Claudio himself appears not to be happy with his reasoning; immediately after the above, he pauses to reflect, then continues, "Perhaps this is only a moribund reflectiveness washed ashore by my mortally alert blood." That he resorts to an argument based on his own ignorance, moreover, indicates that he has learned nothing at all in the course of the play, since he had earlier used the same argument, his eagerly admitted *lack* of experience of life, in attempting to persuade Death that he is not yet ripe.

But what, then, ought Claudio to learn from the show Death puts on for him? Let us look at what Death *says* he will teach Claudio:

> Stell dich dorthin und schweig und sieh hierher
> Und lern, daß alle andern diesen Schollen
> Mit lieberfülltem Erdensinn entquollen,
> Und nur du selber schellenlaut und leer. (W3 73; G 212)

All *other* people experience a loving "sense for the earth," while only Claudio is empty, comparable to the "tinkling cymbal" of 1 Cor. 13:1. But this thought is exactly what Claudio himself has insisted on from the start.

> Was weiß ich denn vom Menschenleben?
> Bin freilich scheinbar drin gestanden,
> Aber ich hab es höchstens verstanden,
> Konnte mich nie darein verweben. (W3 64–5; G 201)

And after Death arrives, Claudio argues once again that his own case is unique because he has not experienced natural human life as lived by others. He argues precisely that "all others" participate in

human love, while only his own life has consisted of nothing but sterile understanding.

How can Death threaten to teach Claudio what Claudio himself insists on? One could maintain, I suppose, that in the few moments of his encounter with Death and the ghosts, Claudio learns to overcome his uniquely morbid self-conscious detachment from life; but that argument would involve hanging a huge load of psychology on a textual thumbtack. It seems to me that the logical structure of the text makes inevitable the recognition that Death's speech is ironic. When angry with a child we sometimes say things like, "I will teach you to be disobedient"; and I contend that Death is employing this type of irony. What Death says is the opposite of what he actually means to teach Claudio: namely, that Claudio is really *not* different from everyone else, that all people suffer from what Claudio regards as his unique malady or "curse" (W3 66; G 203), that all people are thus fools, that *there is no such thing as "natural" human life for us to submerge ourselves in completely*; or in the terms used earlier, that no person can hope to be exempt (by some form of complete naturalness) from the confusions and inner tensions of self-consciousness. This is the only "lesson" that makes sense in the context. If Death were to show that Claudio's life had been uniquely unnatural, he would support the argument that Claudio is not yet ripe to die.

3

We must therefore see the play as more than merely a dialogue between Claudio and Death; we must look more carefully than critics usually do at the apparition, the three ghosts who after all speak 140 of the play's 542 lines. For the very presence of those dead people raises a question; the walking of a ghost indicates traditionally that the person had unfinished business when he died – as, for example, revenge in the case of the elder Hamlet. But this idea conflicts with the idea that by contrast with Claudio, his mother, sweetheart and friend had somehow managed to live out their lives in a kind of organic perfection, their death being then only the natural confirmation of their ripeness for it. In fact, what Claudio ought to learn from the vision is that those three lives had been basically similar to his own, characterized by the same anguished self-preoccupation or egoism that he imagines sets him apart.

Claudio's excessively intellectual self-awareness automatically

gives rise to strictly unsatisfiable desires in him, especially the desire for suffering ("das Leid"), which in his experience is always "shredded and corroded by thought, faded and washed out" (W3 65; G 202). "Wie hätt' ich Wonne aus dem Schmerz gesaugt," he exclaims, "What ecstasy I would have sucked out of genuine pain." But although pleasurable pain may in general be possible, the psychological phenomenon of masochism is not what Claudio has in mind. What he means by "Schmerz" or "Leid" is an experience so perfectly painful as to call forth a reaction in which his entire being will be passionately mobilized, leaving no room for thought, an experience that will utterly overwhelm the detached disinterest he has come to despise in himself; and given this requirement, the idea of *knowingly* deriving pleasure from pain becomes a contradiction in terms. If we know that the experience of pain ought ultimately to be pleasurable, then strictly speaking the experience is not painful after all – at least not in the sense that it overwhelms our conscious detachment – whereupon we have no basis for pleasure and are left instead, as Claudio says, with mere discomfort, "Unbehagen." Claudio's self-awareness, his compulsive standing-back from his own experience, robs his pain of its painfulness, his joy of its joy, his life of its vitality.

But the idea of enjoyable suffering, which we learn from Claudio to regard as a sign of experience corrupted by consciousness, also occurs in the mother's first words, about her "sweet pains": "Wie viele süße Schmerzen saug ich ein / Mit dieser Luft" (W3 74; G 213). Even the verb "saugen" reminds us of Claudio's monologue, and so suggests the confusions of self-awareness. The mother then describes her mental life as:

> ein dumpfes Rad
> Mit Ahnungen und traumbeklommenem
> Geheimisvollem Schmerzgefühle, das
> Wohl mit der Mutterschaft unfaßlichem
> Geheimen Heiligtum zusammenhängt
> Und allem tiefsten Weben dieser Welt
> Verwandt ist. (W3 74; G 213–14)

If there is in fact an "incomprehensible secret sanctity" in motherhood, then I suppose a mother must know about it. But her knowledge of this mystery that envelops her very being can certainly not be objectified in an adequate verbal formulation on her part; and when Claudio's mother invokes the mystery directly, her speech therefore becomes stilted, unnatural, especially in the

three complicated and decidedly uncolloquial datives. We are reminded of Claudio's own distorted relationship to "das Leben," his error in regarding life as an unattainable mystery, instead of simply living it.

> So glitten mir die jungen Tage,
> Und ich hab nie gewußt, daß das schon Leben heißt.
> Dann . . stand ich an den Lebensgittern,
> Der Wunder bang, von Sehnsucht süß bedrängt,
> Daß sie in majestätischen Gewittern
> Auffliegen sollten, wundervoll gesprengt.
> Es kam nicht so . . (W3 71–2; G 210)

Claudio had wasted his "young days" in expecting that the "gates of life" would be burst by an incomprehensible miracle; and his mother, in the same way, instead of simply being a mother, is attempting to inflate the facts of her life into a kind of religion. The result, her irritating self-pity, is no more genuine or attractive than Claudio's self-pity.

Another symptom of Claudio's morbid self-awareness, and of his compulsive search for miracles in the ordinary, is his fixation upon *remembered* experiences, especially his "times of wandering," when all things had come "alive" and offered themselves to his "loving comprehension" (W3 69; G 207). But if this is a fault in Claudio, then surely it is also a fault in the girl, who had sacrificed her whole existence on the altar of one memory, the memory, like Claudio's, of a time when all things had seemed pervaded by joyful vitality ("das wurde alles schön / Und redete mit wachen, lieben Lippen!" [W3 75; G 215]). Even on her deathbed, the girl admits, she had thought of nothing but the revenge she is now taking upon Claudio for his having disappointed her. Of course she does not call it revenge; she wants to be remembered "not with horror or pain, but only as when someone drinks a glass of wine and the bouquet reminds him fleetingly of a gentle pleasure that he seems to have forgotten" (W3 76; G 216). But especially on the stage, this speech comes close to being comic. Obviously the girl *is* torturing Claudio, who must surely show it while she speaks and now buries his face in his hands.

The case of Claudio's erstwhile friend, finally, is the clearest of all. His complaint is that Claudio had *deprived him of his illusions*; for if the passionate convictions he boasts of had been more than mere illusions, Claudio's detached irony would have had no effect on him. Even as he speaks, the friend is still in the grip of illusion,

for he now boasts of his capacity for self-sacrifice; he uses self-sacrifice as a basis for self-magnification, which is absurd, and clearly this absurdity had been characteristic of him in life as well. He is a shallow and deluded individual who clings to a contradictory idea of himself in the same way that Claudio has clung to the illusion of the uniqueness of his self-conscious agony.

He brings one specific charge against Claudio. Claudio, after abandoning a certain woman, had explained his attraction to her in words that the friend now quotes:

> So reizte mich des Mädchens müde Art
> Und herbe Hoheit, so enttäuschten Sinns
> Bei solcher Jugend. (W3 77–8; G 218)

He had been merely "enticed" by a certain disillusioned nobility in the girl's manner; and the friend now accuses him:

> Und sattgespielt warfst du die Puppe mir,
> Mir zu, ihr ganzes Bild vom Überdruß
> In dir entstellt, so fürchterlich verzerrt,
> Des wundervollen Zaubers so entblößt,
> Die Züge sinnlos, das lebend'ge Haar
> Tot hängend, warfst mir eine Larve zu,
> In schnödes Nichts mit widerlicher Kunst
> Zersetzend rätselhaften süßen Reiz. (W3 78)

Having played your fill, you threw the toy to me, its whole image ruined in you [!] by satiety, so horribly distorted, so stripped of its magic, the features senseless, the living hair hanging dead, you threw me a mere mask, you decomposed (with your revolting skill) a sweet mysterious charm into a vile nothing.

It is clear from this speech, however, that Claudio had not ruined the woman herself in any objective sense; it is not even suggested that he had injured her intangibly, in her character or attitudes. Rather, by being too analytical ("Zersetzend") in his remarks, he had sullied the friend's mental *image* of her; and it follows that the friend had really been in love only with his own fancies, with a mere "Reiz" (compare Claudio's "So reizte mich"), not a real person. What the friend charges Claudio with is thus exactly what he himself had been guilty of, a lack of objective, outward commitment in love. This is part of the meaning of the final stage direction in which Claudio and the friend are merged in one figure.[5]

4

What effect does the essential similarity between Claudio's life and the ghosts' have on our general idea of the play? In the first place, it elucidates Death's key speech to Claudio:

> Was allen, ward auch dir gegeben,
> Ein Erdenleben, irdisch es zu leben.
> Im Innern quillt euch allen treu ein Geist,
> Der diesem Chaos toter Sachen
> Beziehung einzuhauchen heißt,
> Und euren Garten draus zu machen
> Für Wirksamkeit, Beglückung und Verdruß.
> Weh dir, wenn ich dir das erst sagen muß!
>
> (W3 72; G 210–11)

What is given to all was also given to you, an earthly life to be lived in an earthly manner. In all of you a spirit wells up faithfully that commands you to breathe relatedness into this chaos of dead things and make your garden of it, for efficacy, happiness, and frustration. Alas for you, if *I* have to tell you this.

It follows from the argument above that what is meant here is not that Claudio, by excessive intellectuality, has denied himself participation in some vegetably natural human life. The meaning is quite different: that Claudio's anguished self-awareness belongs to life as it is given to everyone, and that existence *is*, as Death says, a "chaos of dead things," in which to live authentically ("irdisch") is not simply available as an "elixir" (W3 65; G 201) but requires of all of us the unavoidable and ultimately futile struggle with self-conscious confusion ("Wege noch im Ewig-Dunkeln finden" [W3 80; G 220]). In the sense that he has remained more clearly aware of this futility, Claudio is *less* a fool than the ghosts.

But the knowledge that existence is eternally empty, that we *are* nothing but the convolutions of our self-consciousness, is a useless knowledge; the truth is not at all changed or softened by our knowing it. In order to live our lives usefully and vigorously, we must *forget* the truth,[6] even at the cost, as for the ghosts, of acting and thinking foolishly. The truth is always true, the world *is* of itself merely chaotic (the silence before speech), which means that all order, all meaning or "Beziehung" that we "breathe into things," is ultimately false; wherever we "make a garden" we falsify truth (since in truth there are no paths "im Ewig-Dunkeln"), thus making fools of ourselves. But still, we must do this, we have no

choice; this particular absurdity *is life*. In the sense that he has imagined himself capable of thinking his way around the absurdity of life, rather than submitting to it, Claudio is *more* a fool than the ghosts.

At the end of the play, however, in his last speech, Claudio does at last willingly submit to absurdity. Precisely the logical absurdity of that speech makes it significant. What Claudio does now is what his mother and the girl have done in their self-pity, and what the friend has done in his confused self-magnifying selflessness. He takes an idea (here the idea of death), any idea that happens to be "washed ashore" by his blood, and he calls it "life"; he hurls himself desperately, and knowingly, into an absurd illusion. He thus imposes, for himself, a false and foolish order upon the chaos of existence, and in doing so he does what all humans do. If we consider his last speech purely as an action, not as the communication of meaning, then precisely our recognition of its absurdity makes it, for us, *an exact image of all human life*, and it is toward this climax that the whole play is directed.

The source of Claudio's "cure," says Hofmannsthal, is "Dass der Tod das erste wahrhaftige Ding ist . . . dessen tiefe Wahrhaftigkeit er zu fassen im Stande ist" (W3 448; A 106), "that death is the first true thing whose deep truth he is capable of grasping." There is a certain amount of word-play here. "Wahrhaftig" ordinarily means "genuine," whereas "Wahrhaftigkeit" refers ordinarily to veracity; and the sense of this ambiguity seems to be that the genuineness of Claudio's encounter with death as a thing or event is reflected in the truth told Claudio by Death as a person. The truth told by Death, however, is that all is eternally in darkness, that existence is basically chaotic, that any truth that ever seems to prevail is not a truth that can be "told" objectively, but must be created by positive, arbitrary, absurd human involvement and activity. If Claudio were now to attempt to tell us (or himself) *this* truth, the result would be merely ridiculous; the very existence of any object that might be captured in language (including ourselves) depends precisely on our forgetting Death's truth, putting it behind us in favor of an absurd commitment to life. Language, if we presume too much upon its apparent claim to referential accuracy, automatically leads into "lies, relativities, juggling" (W3 448; A 106), since by experiencing our language as a mere response to some absolutely true state of affairs, we "experience life like a book" (W3 66; G 204) and falsify the dependence of truth on language as action; this much the later author of the Chandos letter already

understands well enough. Therefore, in his last speech, Claudio resolves not to take his language seriously as a vehicle of knowledge; he uses it instead as *pure action*, a deliberate headlong plunge into the absurdity of existence. And it is from this resolve, from the force of that last speech as action, that the "transfiguration" Hofmannsthal speaks of must be understood to radiate.

I have made this argument in the usual form of literary interpretation, and I am convinced of its validity on this level. But considered philosophically, the argument is profoundly questionable. For the systematic premises of the definition of language as "pure action" imply that *all* language, *all* utterance, must have this quality; otherwise the "chaos of dead things" would remain a chaos, and there would be no world. Indeed, precisely the logical and referential qualities of language, the qualities by which an utterance appears *not* to be absurd, are the organs of its activity, its insistence upon world, upon something rather than nothing. Therefore, in order to understand what Claudio "learns" in the play, in order to distinguish between the types of utterance represented by his last speech and his first, we must have recourse to the criterion of his *awareness*, which, however we qualify it, boils down to the idea of just that sort of objective recognition of the truth that is excluded by the argument as a whole. Even if we find some cleverer way of making the necessary distinction, still *our* categories will inevitably fix "action" as one of several given possibilities, rather than acknowledge it as the aboriginal site at which "possibility" first happens. And the cleverer or subtler or more complicated our distinctions, the harder it becomes to maintain contact with the text of the play; the psychological argument as presented above is I hope still coherent, but it approaches the limits of permissible tenuousness.

And yet, on the other hand, I contend that this philosophical undermining of our critical response to the play is itself an integral part of that response, a device by which the situation of the *reader* is preserved even in an actual theater. Claudio's last speech, as we hear it spoken on the stage, possesses *immediately* the quality of action, action in progress here and now, in our presence; and our psychological understanding of the similarity of Claudio's mental situation to that of the revenants provides that action with a clear fictional context within which we recognize it as an absurd commitment to the absurdity of life. But when the logical and philosophical consequences of this recognition dawn on us, that context evaporates. (I will argue in the next chapter that our situation in the

theater, especially the quality of the performance as play-acting, practically enforces this self-undermining reflection on our part.) For the notion of absurdity as a quality definable within a psychological *order* is self-contradictory; the very idea of absurdity, which the fictional situation requires, dissolves the relation by which Claudio's action belongs to that situation in the first place. Thus, in the theater, we are faced for a moment with language as *nothing but* action, an action about which the fictional and even the real order of existence must take shape, not an action within such order, an action originating in the same emptiness that is represented for the reader of the "Reiselied" by the moment before the poem begins.

Again, *Der Tor und der Tod* is actually earlier than the major poems. In order to be chronologically accurate, therefore, we should perhaps speak not of a preservation of the reader, but of Hofmannsthal's discovery, in the mechanism of drama, of a poetic strategy that is then carried out differently in the language-as-writing of the poems. Perhaps Szondi's argument, that the "lyrical dramas" represent a criticism of the earlier poetry and a preparation for the later poetry, could be adapted here.[7] But an exact description of the genesis of this thought would require a book in itself. My purpose is to prepare for understanding the importance, later in Hofmannsthal's career, of the idea of the theater as a device for training the poetic audience, for establishing by a process of enactment certain crucial subtleties of thought and language that tend otherwise to be falsified in the operation of modern culture.

5

We can now pull together a number of earlier arguments. The sense of language as pure action at the end of *Der Tor und der Tod* foreshadows the idea of language as aboriginal world-creation in the "Reiselied," along with the related idea of referential emptiness, language as a mere game. Poetry, in playing with language metaphorically, reveals the true nature of language in general and so suggests what Goethe calls our "godlikeness," our presence at the generating center of the real.

The problematics of this thought emerges in *Der Tor und der Tod* from its implications concerning an inevitable human foolishness and the consequent need for *lightness* in our attitude toward existence. Self-consciousness is not a given existential problem, but rather (here the argument on Kleist applies) it becomes exactly the degree of problem we insist on making it. Claudio, like Chandos

after him, takes both himself and his language too seriously, and what is depicted in the play, as later in the fictional letter, is the revenge wrought by an ultimately absurd existence on those who "experience life like a book." (These words could in fact be a motto for Chandos, who has desired literally to realize his existence in the form of a book entitled "Nosce te ipsum" [P2 10].) The idea that "lightness" is *necessary*, however – considered as an ethical or metaphysical teaching – is practically self-contradictory, since necessity is the opposite of anything that can be taken lightly. And the same problematic situation arises from the idea, in *Der Tor und der Tod*, of an ever-renewed primal absurdity in things (since that absurdity is compromised by the order of the discourse that locates it), as well as from the idea of the human self as the origin of the articulated universe in which it lives (since the self has extension and identity only as a result of that articulated order). All of these cases involve a truth that implies the impossibility of its own direct formulation, or of its own presence in experience, and so dictates irony as an expressive mode. As in the "Reiselied," no sooner do we experience the vision of our centralness in an eternally harmonious nature than the vision automatically fails us. We can realize the truth only by forgetfulness or sacrifice, only by turning our backs on it, like Claudio in his final speech.

Not only Claudio's irony, but Death's as well, in the speech about what Claudio is to "learn," thus becomes necessary. Conceivably Death could point out that the three dead people were (and are) as deeply affected as Claudio by the confusion of self-conscious existence; he could argue (as he almost does when he says, "Doch alle *reif*, fallt ihr in meinen Arm" [W3 72; G 211]) that Claudio's own self-conscious anguish is only apparent, only the necessary Christ-like sacrifice by which mankind's eternally harmonious union with nature is realized. But then truth, in the sense of the paradox of the soul, would not be told. The anguish of self-conscious alienation from nature is our *natural function*, the medium of our belonging to nature, the tension in which articulated nature itself originates. But the statement of this truth is empty, for to *know* with certainty that our anguish is merely apparent would be to cease undergoing it in experience, thus not to carry out our natural function after all. Even the statement of these ideas in the form of a paradox expresses not the truth itself, but precisely the sort of deluded pretension that the paradox criticizes; the statement, *by* being a statement, automatically lays claim either to disinterested knowledge or to a special, individual intensity of

experience. Truth therefore requires irony; in order to be expressed, it must be toyed with and shown cloaked in indirectness, as Death shows it to Claudio, and as Hofmannsthal himself shows it in the medium of drama, by enforcing, or at least encouraging, our own enactment of it.

5

IDEA, REALITY AND PLAY-ACTING IN *DER TOR UND DER TOD*

Our sense of language as action in *Der Tor und der Tod* depends for its full development on the play's quality as performable drama. In this view, *Der Tor und der Tod* already belongs to Hofmannsthal's exploration of the theater as an artistic vehicle, and I propose now to consider, accordingly, the symbolic significance for an audience of their actual personal and social situation during a performance.

I

Richard Alewyn says of the relation between Claudio and Death:

> When he sees Death, who is really life, stand forth from outside him, this becomes possible only because he has placed himself outside of life. What sees Death approach is nothing but Claudio's consciousness, which has alienated itself from his life. And what enters in the mask of Death is nothing but his own banished and forgotten life. What is terrified is his consciousness, what defends itself is his consciousness, and what dies – the only thing capable of dying – is his consciousness, what Schopenhauer calls "individuation."[1]

Not only the specific shape in which Death appears, but the very fact that he appears is conditioned by Claudio's mental state, his overconscious alienation from his own life. Death *appears* to Claudio because Claudio is the sort of person who not only lives his life and dies his death, but also at the same time stands intellectually apart, in the position of a spectator.

This perception is correct as far as it goes. Death's music plunges Claudio into "a youthful ocean" of feeling, enabling him for a moment to recover the experience of being "a living member in the great ring of life" (W3 69; G 207). And Death then introduces himself in a cascade of metaphors – the "warm flood," the "great round dance," the "shivering of your earthly form" – that all suggest a transcendence of individuality, the reception of the whole

world as "your own" (W3 71; G 209). "The world, divided up into individuals," we recall, "yearns for unity, Dionysus Zagreus desires to be reborn"; and in *Der Tor und der Tod*, it is death that effects (or Death who claims to effect) this reunification of being. But the articulated or individuated world transcended by death is the whole of the *phenomenal* world ("Die Welt als Vorstellung"), and it follows that death as such *cannot appear*, any more than the Will as such, in Schopenhauer's definition, can appear. What appears in the person of Death, therefore, as Alewyn says, is a particular and incomplete *idea* of death conditioned by Claudio's mentality – in one word, a hallucination – and it is significant in this regard that Claudio knows immediately who Death is without being told. Death terrifies Claudio because Claudio both desires and needs to be suffused with uncontrollable emotion, "durchglutet innen" (W3 72; G 210); Death reproaches Claudio because Claudio both desires and needs to reproach himself; Death calls up figures from Claudio's past because Claudio both desires and needs to re-experience his own life, which he thinks he had failed at. The whole of the play, from Death's entrance on, may thus be regarded as "moribund reflectiveness" on Claudio's part, "washed ashore by the mortally alert blood." At the end, when Claudio dies, the appearance of death merges with the reality; but up to that point the figure of Death is essentially a hallucination, a function of Claudio's own thinking.

If this is the case, however, then what is Claudio's servant doing there? Clearly the office of the servant, whose part is otherwise easily dispensable, is to bear witness to the *objective* existence of Death and the ghosts.[2] I have said that Death as he appears belongs merely to Claudio's way of thinking. If there were no servant, we could regard Claudio and Death as existing on different planes, Claudio in reality and Death in Claudio's mind, like Brutus and the Ghost in *Julius Caesar*, IV, iii. But *Der Tor und der Tod* is more like *Hamlet* in this respect (as in others); there is an outside witness, and we must therefore regard Death and the revenants as *more* than figments. How does this sort with the idea of Death as a hallucination?

The answer is illuminating, provided we agree that the question really exists. If Death as he appears on stage is a hallucination produced by Claudio's overintellectualized mode of existence, and if Death nevertheless appears together with Claudio on that plane of appearance which by convention we accept as "reality" in the play, that is, if the hallucinatory vision of Death appears to us directly (not only mediately, by way of Claudio's thought), then it

follows that Death is *our* hallucination as well, that the appearance of Death also reflects *our* way of thinking, hence that our own mode of conscious existence is not different from Claudio's. Our understanding of the psychological aspect of Alewyn's perception, that Death is a manifestation of Claudio's consciousness, taken together with the verification of Death's presence by the servant, maneuvers us into an understanding of our own essential kinship with Claudio.[3] In watching the play we are obliged to think about, to attempt to understand from a detached perspective, what Claudio is thinking about; but Claudio's problem is precisely that he thinks too much about life, and does not simply live it, that his position with respect to life is comparable to that of the spectator at a play, which is our position. Claudio thus illustrates an existential situation in which we, merely *by* being an audience, also participate, regardless of our attitudes or opinions.[4]

And if it appears that this dual perception of Death, as both hallucination and objective reality, is too tenuous or contrived to be acknowledged as belonging to the work's intention, we need only recall that in one of young Hofmannsthal's favorite books, the situation in the tragic theater at Athens is described in closely similar terms:

> *Dionysus*, the true stage hero and center of the vision ... is not actually present in the early period of tragedy, but is only imagined as present: that is, the tragedy is originally only "chorus," not "drama." Later the attempt is made to show the god as a real one, to present the vision-figure, with its transfiguring frame, as visible to every eye; thus "drama" in the narrow sense begins. Now the task of the dithyrambic chorus is to excite the listeners' mood [Stimmung] to the point that when the tragic hero appears on stage, they see not a clumsily masked person but a figure of vision, born as it were out of their own transport.[5]

There are differences. Hofmannsthal does not use "mood" to present us with a vision produced by our "transport," but uses our *understanding* of the relation between Death and Claudio to persuade us that Death is a vision produced by our *consciousness*. *Der Tor und der Tod* is not a tragedy, and even if it were, Death would not be the hero. But Death himself emphasizes his relation to Dionysus.

2

While composing *Der Tor und der Tod* Hofmannsthal notes:

> When these living dead traverse the stage, Claudio experiences that vertigo, that θαυμάζειν in which one is suddenly astonished at existence.

For a moment life seems to him a dream, a fata morgana, a delusion. Then he acknowledges in these phantasms, to whom deep feelings bind him, the highest and the only true reality [die höchste allein wirkliche Realität].

(W3 436; A 100)

The erstwhile friend accuses Claudio of being too much an admirer of Horace (W3 76–7; G 216); θαυμάζειν (*admirari*, wonder, astonishment) is therefore apparently just the medicine Claudio requires. And how is such wonderment possible if we do not begin by placing ourselves, as Alewyn says, "outside of life"? If we manage to live in accord with our own life or lot, how shall existence ever astonish us? Claudio's self-conscious alienation thus seems a necessary precondition for the surge of feeling by which he is now affected. But it does not follow that self-consciousness alone, as a structural principle in experience, is sufficient to produce self-astonishment. Claudio actually attempts twice to use his own self-consciousness in this manner, and he fails both times.

From his opening words on, his apparent anguish steadily intensifies until the passage ("Und auch das Leid!" [W3 65; G 202]) in which he expresses his desire for true pain or suffering. He is now attempting to suffer anguish because of his inability to suffer anguish, which is hopeless; to the extent that he succeeds in suffering, he will also remove the reason for his suffering. "Pain touched me with its wing, and I grew dull, and mere discomfort came instead," he concludes; and these words describe what actually happens in him as he speaks them. He grows "matt," his artificial, self-consciously induced astonishment and outrage at existence inevitably fail, and his momentary excitement fades. He becomes aware of this inner process with a start, and now admits to himself that he has engaged in mere "brooding."[6]

Then, however, after the servant brings the lamp, he begins the same process all over again, except that now – by artificial rather than natural light – he uses not the idea of nature but that of art as his intellectual foil. All art is a product of feeling and so attracts him, since he is a seeker after feeling; but it also always disappoints him, for the feeling in art is neutralized by the form, trapped like the living fish in a net (W3 66). Now, therefore, he attempts to derive from his collected art-objects at least a feeling of outraged revulsion, since the feeling of joyful affirmation is denied him: "You encircled me, a delusive fluttering swarm, voracious implacable harpies." That is, he attempts to derive an intense feeling precisely from his inability to derive an intense

feeling from art, which is a repetition of the hopeless emotional–intellectual sophistry he had engaged in with regard to nature. Therefore the second climax comes more quickly – in the words "Und Glück ist alles, Stunde, Wind und Welle!" (W3 67)[7] – and fades with less of a shock. Claudio must now admit that he lives essentially "with no grounds for complaint."

Self-consciousness in itself, though it renders the soul "inexhaustible," is not sufficient to awaken a true sense of wonder at existence. Only the specific thought of death, when we think it as directly as possible, produces the helpless vertigo that Claudio needs and is striving for. In a passage Hofmannsthal probably knew, Schopenhauer says,

> philosophical astonishment in particular cases is conditional upon a higher development of intelligence, but in general not upon this alone. It is doubtless the knowledge of death, along with the observation of suffering and distress in life, that most strongly impels us toward philosophical reflection and metaphysical interpretations of the world.[8]

Claudio has always desired to be astonished by life, but only by confronting himself with the idea of death can he achieve such astonishment, only through the recognition that he too, like his spectral visitors, is but a living corpse. Life is not *there*, behind some magic gateway; rather, as Death says, life is never anything but the temporary and arbitrary creation of apparent order in what always remains fundamentally a "chaos of dead things." The astonishing quality of the soul is not merely that it is "inexhaustible," but that it is also indissolubly attached to *mortality*, that there is no place for its inexhaustibility to be realized as satisfaction or repose. Therefore Claudio must acknowledge the ghosts' "reality"; he recognizes that he himself is one of their number, that all ordered reality, even the reality of ourselves (our "ego"), is never anything but an apparition, the impermanent organization and animation by "Geist" of dead elements that tend normally toward chaos.[9]

It is clear, therefore, that Claudio more or less *deliberately* calls forth the vision of death in order to accomplish what he had failed to accomplish by reflecting sophistically on nature and art, to maneuver himself intellectually into a state of overwhelming astonishment at his existence. And the servant's testimony to Death's and the ghosts' objective presence, to the fact that the vision is ours as directly as it is Claudio's, reminds us that we, the audience, are doing exactly what Claudio is. In accepting the

conventions of literary or dramatic art, we are *deliberately* attempting to think about human existence so as to be astonished by it; or at least we are consciously and expectantly open to this possibility.[10] We are, as every audience is, that all too literate gathering of whom Goethe's theater director says, "They sit there calmly with eyebrows raised and look forward to being astounded" (*Faust*, 41–2). It is for the sake of achieving astonishment (why else?) that *we* allow ourselves to be confronted with the otherwise uncomfortable idea of death. Again our kinship with Claudio is insisted upon, Claudio's function as our representative on the stage.

We can now work out in more detail the paradox of the soul, the idea that the soul achieves its unified divine being only by way of a submission to the fragmentation of finite existence. It follows from the persistence of primal chaos that nature must always be disclosed to the articulating human self as danger and destruction, that transience and mortality are the price we pay for the experience of ordered reality. "Man has created death"; the humanly generated order of experience necessarily entails mortality. But on the other hand, only death, or at least the idea of death, a belief in our mortality, can produce in us an astonishment at existence; and as Claudio insists, this astonishment is a *condition* of our existence, not merely a result. If we are not astonished by existence, then we do not *know* of our existence, any more than the animal that is attended by "Nor dread nor hope," which is to say, we do not truly live as that self-conscious being about whom nature takes shape. The creation of death is therefore not only a consequence of our ontological situation, but is also itself the original "poetic" act by which a primal "chaos of dead things" is ordered and made to exist.[11]

This point brings us to our main topic, principles of lyric and drama. For the distinct functions of the two genres are determined, for young Hofmannsthal, by the reversibility of the logical relation between the experience of existence as articulated order and the astonishing experience of mortality. Lyric and drama aim at a single basic truth, but approach it from opposite directions. Lyric poetry, merely by being written language (this quality is insisted upon precisely by contrast with the poet's conventional pose of speaking or singing),[12] always begins with the arbitrary assertion of communicable order, of the "we"; drama, merely by being in the theater, always begins with the desire for an astonishment that is in truth the experience of mortality. The author's task, in both cases, is to realize the philosophical quality of his genre. Hence the complexity

of the "Terzinen," by which the reader is invited to experience his intellectual detachment from the writing not as an obstacle to understanding but as a surpassing of understanding, a full participation in the described experience of mortality. And in *Der Tor und der Tod*, our situation in the theater maneuvers us into the recognition that Death is our hallucination in the same way he is Claudio's; by the simple act of going to the theater we find ourselves doing exactly what Claudio is doing, deliberately attempting to provide ourselves with what we recognize is a philosophically necessary astonishment at our existence. But this act in its turn is a symbolic re-enactment of the original poetic source of our existence (the creation of death, the assertion of the "we," depending on how we look at it) in which we are thus invited to participate ritually.

3

"New version of Euripides' *Bacchae* needed" (A 100), notes Hofmannsthal while working on *Der Tor und der Tod*; and there are several echoes of that Bacchic-dance tragedy in Hofmannsthal's "Kleine Todtentanzcomödie" (W3 246; G 106).[13] Death's association of Dionysus with Venus (W3 70; G 209) recalls the same association made scornfully by Pentheus (line 225). Cadmus' remark that even if Dionysus were not a god, Pentheus would still be well-advised to consider him one (lines 333–6), is suggested by Claudio's admission in his final speech that it does not really matter to him whether what he says is true: "Kann sein, dies ist nur sterbendes Besinnen." And of course the idea of foolishness is central in the *Bacchae* (e.g. lines 344, 369); Cadmus and Teiresias, greybeards decked out as Bacchants, appear foolish but are wise, whereas with Pentheus the reverse is the case.

More important, however, is the structural similarity between the plays. Claudio, like Pentheus, is "mockingly clever" (W3 77; G 216), and his cleverness is refuted by Death and the ghosts as Pentheus' is by Bacchus and the Bacchantes. Pentheus is simply destroyed, whereas Claudio learns to participate in the dance of Death; but the inner parallel is not affected. Both figures are confronted with the necessity of participating in something their reason recognizes as absurd, this being in Claudio's case the dance of Death which is also the dance of life. "We bind and are bound" (W3 72; G 211); we dance the dance even though our reason relativizes all "binding" by raising us up into an aesthetic detach-

ment from which the particular business of life appears merely trivial. The ghosts are not exempt from these self-conscious difficulties; each attempts desperately to rescue meaning (motherhood, love, self-sacrifice) from the absurdity of existence. Their situation is not different from Claudio's except insofar as their unspoken recognition of the absurdity of existence, like Cadmus' and Teiresias', takes the form not of brooding but of action, of a fulfilment of the obligation to participate nevertheless, to dance the dance.

And in his last speech, in that unashamedly sophistical juggling with the concepts of life and death by which he attempts to create at least an apparent verbal sense in his hopeless situation, Claudio joins the ghosts. That speech is his Bacchic conversion, his affirmation of absurdity, his dancing of the dance of life, and it opens with the words:

> Wie auf der Bühn' ein schlechter Komödiant
> Aufs Stichwort kommt er, red't sein Teil und geht
> Gleichgültig gegen alles andre, stumpf,
> Vom Klang der eignen Stimme ungerührt
> Und hohlen Tones andre rührend nicht:
> So über diese Lebensbühne hin
> Bin ich gegangen ohne Kraft und Wert. (W3 78; G 219)

Like a bad actor on the stage, who appears on cue, speaks his part, and goes, indifferent to all else, dull, unmoved by the sound of his own voice and in hollow tones leaving others unmoved, so I have passed across this stage of life, without strength or worth.

The opposite of a bad actor is a good actor. Claudio is not suggesting that we should become genuine or natural or sincere human beings. He now understands that man, so to speak, is naturally unnatural, in his consciousness of death and in the consequent self-estrangement that makes possible a sense of wonder at things, a recognition of how absurd it is that anything should exist in the first place. Life *is* nothing but a "stage" on which we arbitrarily contrive a game for ourselves in the face of our own knowledge of its absurdity. What Claudio regrets is that unlike the ghosts, he has resisted playing the game. His mistake had been his conception of life as a kind of paradise to be entered through magically opening gates, his refusal to live except on the basis of what Hofmannsthal later calls an "ultimate ground of experience" (A 241), which does not exist in the sense we might want it to.[14] Our job in life, rather, is to play the game, to be *good actors* in the sense of Diderot's

Paradoxe sur le comédien, good both in spite of and by virtue of our self-conscious detachment from our rôles.[15]

The stage, as a stage, thus enacts self-consciousness as a problem. Seen purely as "intellectual sovereignty: looking down on the world" (A 213), self-consciousness is a quasi-divine capability to which Hofmannsthal later gives the name "pre-existence"; it raises us above animal helplessness, and as memory it renders past and present mysteriously simultaneous, overcoming time.[16] But by the same token, consciousness in the form of memory is built on an acknowledgment of precisely the temporality it conquers, hence eventually on the idea of death. Our existence no sooner begins to make sense to us, as a "glorious" taste of eternity (A 213), than it turns out to be senseless; or rather, not only is our existence senseless, but it is so in such a way as to enforce our experience, our knowledge, of its senselessness. Whatever coherent and positive character our existence nevertheless possesses must therefore be sham, play-acting, arbitrarily made by ourselves. Our job relative to the chaos of dead things is to make our "garden" out of it, "for efficacy, happiness, and frustration," to create the whole of our life, not only its pleasant side, as an actor creates the whole of his character and his character's fate on the stage.

Or yet again, the intense self-consciousness of pre-existence "sees only totalities" (A 213); we are conscious of grasping consciously only what has become an ordered totality for us. But this is precisely the "disadvantage" of pre-existence, for it follows that that state can be maintained only "by supposing our having quasi-died." Our own existence, to be viewed as a totality, must in some sense have been terminated; in pre-existence we thus deny ourselves the opportunity to be what we are, to stand in the midst of our own life. Hence the ambivalent "fear and yearning to leave this condition" (A 214): fear because we stand to lose our "sovereignty," since "action presupposes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious" (A 226); but also yearning, for otherwise we find, like Claudio, that our own existence has escaped us. Despite our trepidation we must therefore renounce the vision of totalities and take up our "duty ... to be content with the fragmentary" (A 89). We must do what the actor does, the good actor, when, after having thought about his rôle as a totality, he takes a firm grip and actually places himself in the midst of it, no longer outside as knower and creator but now somehow inside, as the character himself; and this is what Claudio does in his final illogical speech. It is significant that the concept of metamorphosis,

"Verwandlung," which in "Ad me ipsum" describes actual participation in life as opposed to intellectual detachment (A 217–18, 221–2), occurs later as a description of what "the great actor" (P4 233) achieves.

We arrive thus at an understanding of the theatricality of *Der Tor und der Tod*. If the proper conduct of life is not something that comes from the heart, but is comparable to skilful dramatic acting, then it follows that when the play is performed, the very medium by which we perceive it (play-acting) becomes a symbol of the truth it expresses. We recall the systems of paradox in Hofmannsthal's poetry, which engage the reader precisely by way of his conscious detachment. For the relation between the spectator and the actors, in *Der Tor und der Tod*, echoes exactly that between Claudio and the ghosts. Precisely his awareness that the figures before him on the stage are merely play-acting must eventually move the understanding spectator to ascribe to those figures "the highest and the only truly real reality," since what the play means is that life itself is not different from such play-acting. The ghosts accuse Claudio of violating natural human life by excessive detachment; but Claudio cannot learn the true lesson that Death seeks to teach him except by *seeing through* the ghosts, seeing that their existence is every bit as self-consciously infected as his own. Likewise, the actors (by profession) seek to impose on us a powerful illusion of reality; but we understand the meaning of this particular work precisely by *seeing through* the actors, by recognizing the symbolic significance of their acting *as* acting.

The question of *good* and *bad* acting, which Claudio raises, involves us still further in paradox. To the extent that the acting of the play is good (in Claudio's definition), to the extent that we are "moved" by it, we find ourselves in the sentimentally self-deluded condition of the ghosts, forgetful of the rôle of our own consciousness in the constitution of our experience. And we *must* be in this condition, we must to some degree accept the fiction as reality, in order to conclude, in the first place, that Claudio sees through the ghosts' pretence. But as soon as we draw this conclusion, we necessarily also recognize as pretence our own condition of believing, and no perfection of acting can now be "good" enough to maintain us in this condition. The acting is now bad, in the sense that we see through it *as* acting. Precisely this seeing-through, however, is the condition of our recognizing the play-acting as itself an enactment of the true nature of life, so that we now again ascribe "reality" to the acting, which is to say, we again take it as "good"

acting. Thus the acting is good by being bad and bad by being good. But this "Paradox of the Comedian" reflects a paradox in life itself, and in language. For poetry in general (including both lyric and drama) is "bad acting" in that it focusses our attention on truth, rather than living (and letting us live) life. And yet, without such bad acting, without poetry in this sense, knowledge of the truth would be lost altogether, for such knowledge cannot exist within what we imagine as the silent thought of the individual, where it is always instantly falsified by the objectifying process of self-consciousness. If we could *possess* the truth inwardly, as personal knowledge, we would simply inhabit the eternal Italy of our reconciliation with nature, which is impossible. Knowledge of the truth must therefore remain available to us in the "bad acting" of philosophical literature; otherwise we could have no actor's detachment (detachment from what? – if truth were not available), so that our existence would no longer be "acting" at all, and the possibility of realizing human nature by good acting would vanish. Thus a set of theatrical paradoxes transforms our situation, as we sit there, into a complete symbol of life and truth.[17]

4

But then, why does Claudio die? If the dance of Death is really a dance of life, why does Claudio, when he learns to participate, not go forth into the world like the young man in "Der Jüngling und die Spinne,"[18] or for that matter like the audience when the play is over? The answer to this question is at once simple and significant. Given the play's sense of Death as a mere idea, a deliberate hallucination, there must be a corresponding emphasis on death as an actuality, on "the reality of having to die."[19] If we *know* that death is merely an idea by which we create a sense of existential wonder for ourselves, then the idea of death, now drained of its terror, no longer causes us wonder at all. Death must really happen, we must really be mortal, or believe that we are, in order for the idea of death to have its effect on us.

This is another version of the paradox of the soul. Death is in truth only the eternal soul's own idea or instrument or strategy, by which it awakens into life both itself and the whole world; but in order to carry out this function, death must be a reality for us and must be feared as such. Between the reality of death and the idea, however, is an impassable gulf. Death as reality cannot be "understood" or contained in an idea, but must remain a mystery, a country from

which no traveler, once he has truly entered it, ever returns; otherwise it is not truly or really death. Thus some light is shed on a curious feature of Claudio's death: that Death himself, though he is standing there, takes no part in it. Claudio's death is simply the logical climax of his own final speech. It marks the point in his thought at which the paradoxical relation of death and life, or sleep and waking, can be developed no further; and a human figure, whose name happens to be "Death," merely looks on, indeed has not said or done anything at all since before the speech of the girl. This disconnectedness between Death and death, however, between the figure and the event, is itself a symbol of the irreconcilability of the idea with the reality, and so insists on the inadequacy of whatever idea of death *we* form in understanding the play.

At the end of *Der Tor und der Tod* the understanding spectator is thus confronted with the recognition that his understanding is useless; the play offers us death as an object of understanding, but insists that such understanding is impossible. And yet precisely this dilemma *is* the revelation of death as an impenetrable mystery, thus as the reality (or as close as we can come to it without dying) rather than the idea, so that we find ourselves participating in the ritual creation of death, in death's actual presence, after all. The situation is similar to that in "Terzinen II": by being excluded we are enabled to participate; our inevitable failure to lay hold of death intellectually becomes the source of something approaching a direct experience of death, hence a kind of contact with the wellspring of life in us. And this procedure is an attempt not to lift us out of our normal experience, but to reveal the forces by which our normal experience is constituted. Our situation in the theater is identical with our normal situation in existence, but as it were more so.

Or let us return to the idea of play-acting. There is no way in logic to reconcile the truth that all life is essentially play-acting, its character determined by the "Beziehung" we arbitrarily breathe into things, with the recognition that we are helpless before the necessity of dying. This logical impossibility is part of our sense of death as an impenetrable mystery. But on the other hand, only death as a reality and a mystery enables us to recognize, in the first place, that life is mere play-acting, since only death can convince us of life's absurdity, on which this recognition depends. (Significantly, it is Death who pronounces the words, "this chaos of dead things"; for chaos is not available to us as either experience or knowledge except mediately, in that our fear of death renders the order of existence intolerably threatening.) The irreconcilable

opposites are thus also logically dependent on one another. Claudio's death, in revealing death as a mysterious reality, has the same function as death in *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*; it reduces to nothing the value of any particular "rôle" in life and leaves the distinction between "good and bad" only as applied to our "acting" (W10 15; D3 262–3).

Again, if *Der Tor und der Tod*, by ironic contrast with the idea of play-acting, also enforces our response to death as a mystery, then it follows that we in a sense experience the *reality* of death as well as the idea, like Claudio, who meets Death and undergoes death. The fulfilment of our sense of kinship with Claudio is his death as our representative, or as it were our death in him.[20] We are offered, precisely by way of our clear critical understanding, an actual participation in Claudio's experience, the experience of death as both a more or less deliberately conceived idea and a reality before which we are helpless. Even our knowledge (in the theater) that the real person on the stage before us does not really die is swept into the vortex of paradox. That the actor playing Claudio only pretends to die, and that we know this, removes death yet again from the range of our perception, yet again presents us with death as the absolutely Other or Unfathomable, death as a reality. Death, then, is present in the theater after all, and the actor's artificial gesture is thus validated *in* its artificiality, which in turn also symbolizes the metaphysical quality of death as the strategy or contrivance by which we exist.

5

We thus enter an endless circle of paradoxes, and I think a way out of the circle is at least suggested in the theatrical aspect of *Der Tor und der Tod*. In order to make this argument, however, I will begin by discussing another lyric poem.

DIE BEIDEN

Sie trug den Becher in der Hand
– Ihr Kinn und Mund glich seinem Rand –
So leicht und sicher war ihr Gang,
Kein Tropfen aus dem Becher sprang.

So leicht und fest war seine Hand:
Er ritt auf einem jungen Pferde
Und mit nachlässiger Geberde
Erzwang er, daß es zitternd stand.

Jedoch, wenn er aus ihrer Hand
Den leichten Becher nehmen sollte,
So war es Beiden allzu schwer:
Denn Beide bebten sie so sehr,
Daß keine Hand die and're fand
Und dunkler Wein am Boden rollte. (WI 50; G 11)

THE TWO: She carried the goblet in her hand – her chin and mouth resembled its rim – her step was so light and sure that not a drop fell from the goblet. His hand was so light and sure: he rode a young horse, and with a nonchalant gesture forced it to a vibrating halt. But when he was to take the light goblet from her hand, it was too hard for the two of them, for both trembled so much that neither hand found the other, and dark wine rolled on the ground.

Without insisting on my argument as an exclusive interpretation, I contend that the poem is an allegory of verbal communication. The goblet of wine – which at its rim "resembles" the lady's chin and mouth, the threshold of utterance – is a model of language considered as the receptacle of a content meant to be imbibed by its recipient. But in the fiction, communication in this sense fails; the transfer is botched and the content of the symbolized utterance is spilled. This failure of communication, however, is also a *form* of communication, for it is caused by the two people's awareness of each other, as well as by each one's awareness of the other's awareness. The failure of language to transmit its content, in other words, our inevitable loss of what we suppose is intended by an utterance, becomes itself the vehicle of communication.

We have encountered this type of paradox often enough, in the communicative function of the reader's distance from the poem or of the spectator's from the stage. In "Die Beiden," however, a further aspect of the situation is suggested. If the content of an utterance, precisely to the extent that we succeed in communicating effectively, is lost in the process or becomes irrelevant, how shall we account for our conviction that we have understood *this text*? An unusual amount of inference is required for such understanding. Before we are even in a position to make the allegorical leap, we must reconstruct a complete dramatic situation on very little actual evidence. We must visualize a medieval courtyard and a young man and woman, doubtless of noble birth, each conventionally peerless, who are attempting to control within themselves (as the woman controls the wine, the man his horse) the stirrings of an unacknowledged love. Can it be said that the language of the poem *contains* all this material? And if the language, or the

particular utterance, does not contain it, then how do we make the inferences?

Evidently we must in a strong sense understand the poem before it is uttered, or before we read it. The scene evoked by the poem must already, in some form, be a part of our experience or imagination, and especially the meaning of the allegory must already be clearly known to us. We must understand the allegory in the same way as we recognize a friend in a photograph, from previous knowledge; otherwise we will not understand it at all. This particular text positively begs to have its meaning "read into" it, even on the simple level of scenic visualization; and once we have started to exercise our right as readers (which exercise is itself an *instance* of the problematics of verbal communication), the idea of an allegory of verbal communication, and of its failure, is only a short step away. The paradox is insisted upon: the allegory belongs to the text as a meaning, but in order to be understood it must belong to us as a thought before we read the text. If it did not belong to us, we would not understand it; if it did not belong to the text, we should have no idea of how to select *what* thought to apply.

These observations do not refer uniquely to this poem. If they are valid at all, then they must be so for every utterance, and the poem is merely constructed so as to throw them into sharp relief. No utterance *can*, in its lexical, syntactic and logical structure, completely determine a meaning; but on the other hand, the utterance would never be made in the first place if it did not *have* a meaning. The allegory of "Die Beiden" thus involves us in a basic problem of hermeneutics, which appears in various forms from Schleiermacher to Dilthey to Heidegger to, say, Gadamer or Hirsch: that the understanding of a text in some manner requires contributions from both the text and the receiving mind. It is in order to deal with the question of how this may be, how we can still claim to "understand" under these circumstances, that Gadamer speaks of "hermeneutic conversation," and Hirsch of the "genre" of an utterance, the pre-understood guide that determines which areas of our general pre-understanding must be applied in a particular case.[21]

Hermeneutic theory seeks at all costs to avoid the unfruitful conclusion that the content of an utterance is simply *not* transmitted, that we never in truth "understand," but always only "read in" our own prejudices when we claim to understand. This conclusion is unacceptable, because if it were valid there would be no sense in making any utterance whatever; all utterances, including

those of hermeneutic theory, would be in effect empty of meaning. And the allegory of "Die Beiden" also avoids that despairing conclusion, even though the contents of the goblet are spilled. For the content of the utterance, even though it is not successfully transmitted from the young lady to the young man, *is still there*, for all to see, in the poem's last line, "Und dunkler Wein am Boden rollte." The image, especially in the verb "rollte," is remarkably exact. When a watery liquid is spilled onto a dusty surface, say stones in a courtyard, it does not merely run, it "rolls"; it picks up dust, its surface tension is increased, individual drops form globules, and the larger pools form stationary figures with high, rounded edges. Precisely in failing to be transmitted, the content of the utterance – we infer allegorically – is resolved into a visible figure that is available to everybody in the same way, not merely to the utterer and the intended recipient. We ourselves – in reading a poem about two people who are hardly even described to us, but whose emotional and mental life we understand thoroughly – are an example of that "everybody" to whom the secrets of meaning are plainly revealed.

Hofmannsthal's hermeneutics is thus of an entirely radical stamp. The idea of "hermeneutic conversation," or that of "genre," would require a successful cooperation between speaker and recipient, hence in the allegory a successful transfer of the wine. The poem therefore implies, on whatever level of theoretical consciousness, a critique of such ideas, and so presents us with the hermeneutic problem in its most acute form. The idea of understanding as a cooperative process can never be entirely satisfactory. It always contains an unjustifiable leap, since by the nature of the case we can never distinguish exactly among the elements of the cooperation. If we could ever say exactly where "genre" ends and a specific authorial meaning begins, or where understanding starts being interpretation, then the boundaries of meaning would be clearly defined and the original problem, the problem of locating exactly the meaning of an utterance or a text, would not exist. But without an idea like "hermeneutic conversation," or something equivalent, how shall we avoid the despairing and contradictory conclusion that communication simply does not happen? How can Hofmannsthal's allegory avoid this conclusion?

When the problem is put in this acute form, at least the idea of *individual* communication is called into question, the idea that it is in truth *you* who understand what *I* mean. Especially when we are confronted with a text, like "Die Beiden," that compels us to

acknowledge that to understand it at all we must understand it before reading it, the questionability of individual communication is evident; for it is clearly a *collective* foreknowledge that we require here, a fund of images and habits of thought developed by our society or culture as a whole. But is this collective experience merely a background against which the content of the utterance is articulated? Is it merely a question of *my* belonging to an "interpretive community,"[22] of *my* receiving from my culture the information and training needed to make me "competent" as a reader? The images in Hofmannsthal's poem suggest, on the contrary, that it is the actual content of the utterance (the wine) that is made universally available, in a new figure, when the process of individual communication (inevitably) fails. When I speak, in other words, what "I" mean is not really the content of even my own utterance, since it is never received, never realized as such; if "my" meaning has ever existed at all, then it exists only in order to be lost, squandered, spilt, reduced to nothing. But since experience insists nevertheless that we do understand and communicate with each other, it follows that the true content (the liquid figure in the dust) even of "my" utterance is always somehow an object of *our* understanding, collectively, without being contained by the understanding of any individual; somehow "we" are capable of thought and understanding in ways that are achievable by no particular "I." Hence the structure of "Die Beiden" and the importance of communicative failure. The collective level of thought, by definition, is beyond my direct comprehension as an individual; but I can receive an intimation of it, a glimpse of the figure, whenever (and only when) ego-to-ego communication *breaks down*, while still the undeniable experience of understanding persists.

This thought, at least in the context of the present study, is not quite so obscure as it may seem. The idea of language in practice as the repeated speaking-into-being of world, for example, can obviously be articulated, but can never in truth be understood by an individual. For if "I" claim to understand and accept that idea, then I am obliged to apply it to my own speaking, to claim that the world is "my" creation every time I speak (we think of the Baccalaureus in *Faust*, of certain characters in Jean Paul), which is nonsense; such a claim violates my own experience of the world as a pre-existing environment for myself, an experience without which I could never pronounce the words "I" or "world" to begin with. And yet, at least for Hofmannsthal, the idea of speaking-into-being remains inescapable in our thought on language and consciousness,

which is to say, it represents a kind of knowledge, hence (since it is not a knowledge "I" can lay claim to) a knowledge that is possessed or experienced *only* by the collective, the "we." Therefore the crucial word in the "Reiselied," by which this truth is asserted, is the word "uns."

The most important application of this thinking, however, for our purposes, is to the genre of drama. For in the age of printed books, even the feigned singing of lyric poetry must address itself to the solitary reader, to a recipient whose actual situation is out of harmony with the collective component of truth, whereas in the case of drama actually performed, the audience, considered as a social group, is available to represent that collective for which the truth is truly present. In lyric poetry this collective presence is effective by way of an absence, a failure, a spilling of the wine; the magic of lyric poetry is an insistence, precisely by contrast with the poem's feigned speaking, on the reader's detachment, his aloneness with the written text, an aloneness that is magnified to the point where the notion of an ego in a particular situation is consumed, and a "we" of sheer participation arises from its ashes. But in the social environment of the theater it is perhaps possible (as Nietzsche suggests it was for the Greeks) to exchange this misty intimation of truth for its potent actuality.

Der Tor und der Tod is only a first step in the direction of such a theater. But even in this little work, the audience as opposed to the spectator (collective as opposed to individual) has a definite function. The structure of paradoxes engendered by the play produces for the individual spectator a maddening cycle, a speculation in infinite regress. Insofar as death is present in the work, so that we may confront it, it is also necessarily absent, since it is something we cannot experience ("erleben") – even though, by rights, it is our astonishing experience *par excellence* – and can confront only as an objectified, hence falsified idea; but this inevitable absence of death is its quality as mystery, as reality, hence as presence yet again, and so on. In the theater, however, it is possible to regard the absence and the presence of death as *simultaneously* in effect, the former for the spectator, the latter for the audience-as-collective. (This point engages my point above, on the "Terzinen" cycle, that an acknowledgment of other selves is necessary for the experience of our own finitude.) Indeed, death, as a source of wonder at our existence, as a calling into question of the simple integrity of individual existence, is the point in our self-reflection where the necessity of a separate collective plane of awareness becomes clear, a point now

anchored in our experience by the presence of other people in the theater. I do not claim to have shown that this division of functions between the individual and the collective is strictly inferable from the text of *Der Tor und der Tod*. But I think I have shown that the general considerations, hence an impetus toward the form of theatrical drama, are deeply involved even in Hofmannsthal's early poetic thought.[23]

6

THEATRICAL PHILOSOPHY: FROM *DER TOR UND DER TOD* TO *THEATER IN VERSEN*

I will take up *Der Tor und der Tod* once more, and go over the ground again with a view to showing how the phase represented by this play is superseded in Hofmannsthal's development. This type of argument will occur repeatedly as we go on, and always involves a certain ambivalence. For supersedure, in Hofmannsthal's career, never has unequivocally the character of progress; as much is lost as is gained at each step, and there is no climax in this biographical drama. There is only the operation of an incorruptible self-criticism which, with every wounding of itself, opens for itself, and for us, new perspectives upon the problematics of literature.

I

Thirty years after the composition of *Der Tor und der Tod*, Hofmannsthal was content to have the work classified as a "lyrical drama";[1] and in a letter of this period, to Marie Luise Borchardt, he classifies all his dramatic production "vom 'Tor und Tod' bis zum 'Abenteurer' " as strictly non-theatrical poetry (H/RB, p. 178). Perhaps we need not take this letter too seriously; not only had the intervening decades brought considerable development in Hofmannsthal's definition of "drama," but the letter is also meant as consolation for the stage failure of Rudolf Borchardt's *Verkündigung*, thus directed *ad hominem*, not *ad rem*. Still, there is evidence that even in the years 1897–1900, Hofmannsthal had begun to distinguish strictly between lyrical and theatrical drama, and to relegate his own earlier works to the former category. There are letters in which he stresses his desire to reach a broader public than before, through stage productions, and raises doubts about the stageability of his own "lyrical" works; and in 1899–1900 the first book editions of three of his plays appear, not only *Der Tor und der Tod*, but also *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin* and *Die Hochzeit der Sobeide*, each one subtitled "dramatisches Gedicht."[2] With

what justification can we speak of a "theatrical philosophy" in these early "poems"?

The question is one of perspective. Hofmannsthal's idea of the theatrical develops rapidly around 1900, but I will argue that this development is not a complete break with the dramatic principles already at work in *Der Tor und der Tod*. If need be, we can satisfy ourselves yet further about the fundamental theatricality of that early play. The disconnectedness, for example, between Death and death at the end, between the personified idea and the actual event, simply does not exist for the reader as it does for the spectator in a theater. When we *read* the stage-direction "Er sinkt tot zu den Füßen des Todes nieder" (W3 79; G 220), the two different ideas of death, which we receive *only* as ideas, are related to each other directly by the words that express them, "tot/Tod." The crucial *lack* of a direct relation between the man standing there, whose name happens to be "Death," and the event we then observe, Claudio's falling down, is thus obscured by the medium of writing. Or we might again consider Claudio's death itself, which in the theater is not merely imaginary, as it is for a reader, but specifically *artificial*, an artistic ritual in imitation of a conceivable natural event. In the theater, again, the unfathomable mystery of death is thus emphasized as it is not for a reader; for whereas the imaginary is perfectly compatible with the real – we imagine real things (in the sense of remembering, calling to mind, etc.) all the time – the artificial by definition *fails* to be real. And again, precisely this sense of death as an impenetrable mystery *is* the real power of death in our experience, a power that thus affects the spectator with significantly greater intensity than the reader.

But it will be more fruitful for our endeavor as a whole if we now reverse direction and argue from a more strictly theoretical perspective. In particular, it is with the concept of theatrical alienation in mind that I have spoken of "kinship" between the spectator and Claudio, not "identification." Our acknowledgment of kinship with Claudio in fact depends on our ability to make an *objective* psychological judgment about him, to recognize that Death is essentially his own hallucination, so that the servant's testimony can make clear to us that Death is a necessary hallucination from our point of view as well. Our sense of participation in the stage action thus depends on our critical alienation, just as our participation in the evoked experience of the "Terzinen" or the "Reiselied" depends on our self-conscious detachment from the poem as writing.

Hofmannsthal's own theoretical perception of this quality of the theater is apparent as early as 1892, when he writes of Duse's "Geist," her ability to play "the philosophy of her rôle." "She *is* wholly Nora, but she knows more about Nora than Nora knows about herself," says Hofmannsthal, and then suddenly changes the subject to the difference between "the creating poet" and the mere "naturalist" who reproduces what everyone can see for himself (P1 74). The topic here is perhaps not alienation in exactly the sense I have indicated, but the shape of the thinking is suggestive. What the theater aims at is not a simple reproduction of reality, but an intensification of reality by means of "Geist" or "Philosophie," an element of "ungenuineness" that even the acting must possess, in order (we infer) to mediate between the poet's sovereign creative detachment and a corresponding intellectual detachment in the audience. The maintenance of an objectivity of "Geist," moreover, is not an artistic program or dogma like naturalism, but an inevitable result of the poet's "creating"; it is not a technique but a theoretically given necessity that can be exploited in the theater to bring forth a reality somehow realer than real, an "ungenuineness" that is in truth only "excess of clarity."

This theatrical paradox, the usefulness of our alienation to transform the stage into a reality realer than reality itself, is related to the paradox of self-consciousness or of the soul. For self-consciousness, in itself a kind of magic, a quasi-divine capability that liberates us from the bonds of a merely physical or animal existence, also entails a process of self-separation or alienation in us that is the source of our experience of transience and our fear of death. No sooner do we experience the quasi-divinity of self-consciousness than we are subject to a despairing schizophrenia, suspended between the infinite and finite aspects of our nature, unable to experience our existence as a whole, which is Claudio's condition when he first appears. But at this point the whole paradox comes into play; for the idea of death, when we experience it as a present reality, overwhelms us with a sense of wonder at existence, which enables us to live our life fully and authentically after all. This development is the action of *Der Tor und der Tod.* Claudio's self-consciousness generates a despairing sense of fragmentation and alienation from existence, which culminates in the idea of death; but death, once experienced as an astonishing and terrifying knowledge of the unfoundedness of existence in a gaping abyss of truth, then enables Claudio to make the absurd commitment that is human life. And this paradox is parallel to the paradox of the

theater: that our very alienation from the stage initiates a process by which the stage becomes for us "the highest and the only truly real reality."

The crucial question in both cases, however, is where and how death is transmuted from a mere idea into an experienced reality, for without this transmutation neither of the paradoxical processes is complete. In the argument as I have presented it so far, the reality of death is merely a function of the incomprehensibility of the idea of death; and it is evident that only a better understanding of the play's theatrical quality will carry us beyond this argument. Both the text itself and Hofmannsthal's note suggest that for Claudio the establishment of death as reality is effected by the appearance of the ghosts, by the little play put on for him by Death. The parallel with the audience implies clearly that the transmutation of death from idea into reality must be effected by the little play that is put on for *us* as we sit in this theater.

But does this miracle actually happen? or rather, can it be relied on to happen? The theater, it appears, is meant to become that mysterious primal site where man creates death, where death becomes an immediate presence for the ritually joined collective. And this creation of death, in turn, is the same thing as the creation of life, an absurd Bacchic commitment on our part, comparable to Claudio's or to the beggar-soul's "It is my will, dress me!" (W10 22; D3 274) in *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*. But can such a commitment on our part be legislated by the poet? Can we be *compelled* in the theater to perform that strictly free act? Or to put it differently, can the idea of the theater as the site of our creation of death be incorporated legitimately into a *critical* discussion of the play? Is it not merely a speculation on what a certain type of spectator might conceivably experience in response to any play whatever? I have spoken above of a division of functions between individual and collective consciousness. Does the ritual creation of death, if it happens at all, not play itself out entirely within the domain of the collective, hence beyond the reach of the individual mind that responsible criticism necessarily presupposes?

2

The theoretical basis of this problem is still: that there is no such thing as theater without alienation. The alienation of the dramatic spectator from the counterfeit of real action presented on the stage is as inevitable and untranscendable as the internal alienation of

self-consciousness. In effect, therefore, we have taken a critical step backward from the argument of the last two chapters. It remains true that for Claudio a transmutation of death from idea into reality must be imagined, and that a corresponding transmutation is necessary for us, the audience, if the play's meaning is fully realized. But we can no longer simply assert that this transmutation in the theater occurs; we recognize now that the play draws our attention to the general dramaturgical *problem* of alienation.

I contend that the action of *Der Tor und der Tod*; also represents allegorically a solution to that problem. It is Claudio's situation as a spectator at the ghosts' performance that somehow makes death a reality for him. Let us recall, therefore, that what he learns from this performance is not some *new* technique for encountering death and participating in life. He learns, rather, that the lives of the ghosts are basically similar to his own, which means that even in his earlier self-conscious confusion he had *already* been participating absurdly in the dance of life. He learns that his self-consciousness had never excluded him from human life after all, that the confusion of our self-conscious condition is in truth always a measure of our absurd commitment; his only mistake had been that in the very act of making this commitment, he had also resisted it in a particularly perverse way. He learns, in other words, that he is *already* absurdly committed to life (hence *already* in contact with death as reality) and now merely needs to reaffirm his commitment, as the Beggar reaffirms his original "Ich will" when he later refrains from destroying the world and says, "Ich will in wilden Wald" (W10 51; D3 314). The *Großes Welttheater* – in the matter of theodicy, or thanatodicy – is a development and in effect an interpretation of *Der Tor und der Tod*; the Beggar's reaffirmation *in* life of a commitment that *is* his life makes explicit what must be inferred from the verbal and psychological subtlety of the earlier play.

And in this form the argument can readily be applied to the situation of a theater audience. Our critical detachment from the stage, along with the recognition that Death as he appears is our idea as well as Claudio's, raises for us *the question of what we are doing in the theater*. This question, whenever we ask it *as* an audience, is the very apex of theatrical alienation; and once it is asked by an audience of *Der Tor und der Tod*, once its importance is acknowledged, its answer is immediately apparent. We, like Claudio, are deliberately attempting to generate in ourselves a sense of wonder at existence, which is essentially what every

dramatic audience does. But this endeavor is as absurd on our part as on Claudio's. How can we desire to confront ourselves with a truth that can only terrify us? Even if we desire it, how can we succeed in deliberately being astonished?

We must recognize that there are no answers to these questions, that our situation in the theater is not logically justifiable, therefore absurd, a reflection of the general absurdity of self-consciousness as we have learned to recognize it in Claudio. By critically understanding Claudio's confusion, we also understand that our present situation in the theater *is already* an absurd commitment to existence. We, as spectators, are not compelled to make a Bacchic commitment, but rather it is shown to us that by the act of sitting in the theater we have *already* made such a commitment, or more precisely, that our sitting in the theater is the token or reaffirmation of an absurd commitment, an "Ich will," upon which our whole existence is founded. We learn exactly what Claudio learns, with respect not only to Claudio but also to ourselves. Human life always begins anew, its origin repeated in every instant. Death is not created once and for all at some particular time, but is created in every moment of absurd self-conscious existence; and our moments in the theater (in that we ask alienatedly why we are there) are manipulated so as to bring this truth into focus. We do actually carry out the creation of death in the theater, by knowing with "an excess of clarity" that there is no portion of existence in which we do not carry out this creation, no moment in which we do not encounter death as a present reality. To put it differently, the play interprets our mere presence in the theater as a *prior* Bacchic commitment, hence already an anticipatory transmutation of the idea represented on the stage by Death. The magic of drama is already inherent in our coming to the theater, just as the magic of poetry already belongs to our normal use of language.

It is perhaps true that this general type of philosophical awakening can also be made available to the reader of a written text, for the act of reading is inherently as absurd as the act of sitting in a theater. But there is still a difference. In the first place, we have understood at least since Lessing that in narrative the experience of reading tends ideally to merge with the experience narrated, so that the question of why we are reading, *as* a question, is obscured, whereas the question of why we are in the theater is brought into focus by our normal alienated condition there. And in the second place, while it is true that the reader of *Der Tor und der Tod*, like the spectator, is attempting deliberately to astonish himself at his

existence, still his condition as a reader does not have the same quality of commitment; it is merely a tentative mental state that can be prolonged or retracted at the individual's pleasure. In fact, precisely to the extent that he learns the play's lesson, the reader *does* retract his readerly commitment, turns inwardly away from his encounter with the text toward a presumably more fruitful philosophical reflection on the paradox of his own being. His learning is not itself a participation in human life, but at most the acknowledgment that participation is necessary. And such acknowledgment is no more than is already contained in Claudio's insistence, *before* the appearance of the ghosts, that he will learn "Treue," "loyalty" (W3 73; G 211). This speech expresses the play's meaning on a very deep level. Our task, like Claudio's or like the Beggar's in the *Großes Welttheater*, is to achieve "loyalty"; our existence is already, in its ever-present origin, an absurd act of commitment, and our loyalty or good faith is expressed in our willingly carrying out the same act yet again, as Claudio does in the logical absurdity of his last speech. The speech *about* "Treue," however, is still empty as Claudio speaks it, for in merely speaking it he is not yet carrying out what it implies;[3] and this contradiction also characterizes the situation of the reader. What is needed is not merely that we grasp the play's lesson mentally, but that our grasp be realized immediately as an *enactment* of it. The reader's understanding is at most a recognition concerning his own "ego," thus a re-entrance into the labyrinth of self-conscious speculation. What is required of us is that, like Claudio at the end, we leap over this recognition directly into the absurd application of it, that we obliterate the recognizable aspect of the truth in the very act of recognizing it. Otherwise our action expresses not loyalty, but a kind of self-reservation or betrayal.

And in the theater strict philosophical loyalty becomes possible. When the spectator is made aware that his own relation to the play is already evidence of a Bacchic commitment on his part to the absurdity of existence, this recognition refers not merely to an idea of existence in his mind, but to an actual social situation, to the theatrical ritual in which he is actually participating. In the theater the phase of mere individual recognition has *already* been left behind. The spectator not only knows the truth, but also knows that he is now already actually in the process of enacting it, by participating with others in a game that all the participants must recognize as absurd, but that they nevertheless persist in and thereby ritually create the play-order of human existence, including

death. Without this element of actual participation, the play's meaning is realized merely as a complication of individual self-consciousness, whereas the lesson of the play's action is precisely that self-consciousness alone, while it reflects the paradox of the soul, still fails to achieve it. Our self-consciousness is a measure of Bacchic commitment, but is not that commitment itself.

The presence of other people is thus a crucial factor in the operation of the theater – not only as a realizing of the idea of participation, but also as the avenue by which the transformation of our otherwise insufficient self-consciousness into an arbitrary act of commitment first becomes possible. We recall Hofmannsthal's note concerning the influence of other people's point of view on our sense of the nature of our own self (A 92). To experience the self as an object available to others' consciousness – as we must experience it in the presence of other people, say in the theater – is different from simply being conscious of the self. Self-consciousness in a real or at least compellingly imagined solitude, like that of the reader, is a process of non-corrigible predication (from what point of view shall the self's knowledge of itself be challenged?) which therefore constantly *determines* the self, while at the same time, by inserting a conscious distance into its own unity, it also constantly disintegrates or dissolves the self. Objectively considered, this paradox is an instance of the absurdity of existence, but the experience of an arbitrary affirmation of that absurdity is still beyond our reach. For on one hand, the self-disintegrated self is insufficiently existent, insufficiently a fact, to support the idea of affirmative commitment, while on the other hand the self-aware self is too well determined, too well known, to support the idea of arbitrariness. Other people's consciousness, however, has the effect of fixing our own self as a fact or object (as Claudio is fixed by the ghosts) while still *not* determining it, since the process of predication is now not only corrigible but inevitably mistaken (as the ghosts are mistaken about Claudio), this mistakenness being precisely the condition of our acknowledging a consciousness as "other."

Or to turn the argument the other way round, it is true that my solitary or readerly self-consciousness, if it ever exists at all, must persist in the theater. But to the extent that I experience this solitude in the theater, I experience it as alienation from my fellow-spectators, consequently as a perception of the absurdity of what they are doing, their involvement in the theatrical proceeding. And yet, the order of that proceeding is such that in spite of my

alienation, I still find myself *doing* what the others are doing (just as we find ourselves envisioning Death in the midst of our critical consciousness of Claudio's envisioning Death), which doing, on my part, is all the more arbitrary or absurd for its disharmonious relation to my thought about it. That is, I find myself reflected in the other people present (as Claudio is reflected in the ghosts), and the absurdity of my situation is shown back to me from without.

I do not claim that these reflections are philosophically or psychologically rigorous. I offer them as an elaboration of what I think I have shown to be the essential theatricality of *Der Tor und der Tod*, and as a scheme that I will attempt to fill out in discussing Hofmannsthal's later dramatic career. Young Hofmannsthal never himself works out this idea of the theater in detail – nor should we expect him to, given the anti-theoretical nature of the truth involved (recognition must be left behind) plus a certain fashionably jaundiced view of intellectual products in general.[4] But in his early essays there is still a definite feeling for the specifically communal nature of "a packed theater with the oppressive, exciting abundance of humanity that we city-dwellers have forgotten" (P1 40). Or we think of the way the word "we" is used in "Die Legende einer Wiener Woche," the account of Eleonora Duse's Viennese engagement. Or when we read that the effect of great actors is "that in fading words and fleeting gestures they raise the unconscious in us to the level of knowledge and plunge it into Dionysian beauty" (P1 76), we recognize, in the association of "knowledge" ("Erkenntnis") with the idea of Dionysian experience in the theater, an exceptionally clear understanding of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. For the tragic audience does not, in Nietzsche's view, undergo a form of mere intoxication. The spectator's conscious existence is not merely swallowed up in the satyr's illumination, but rather the spectator "*sees himself* magically transformed into a satyr" (my emphasis);[5] that is, his self-detached, self-seeing consciousness as an individual is directly involved in the mechanics of communal participation, as I maintain is the case in Hofmannsthal's idea of the theater.

Furthermore, if we agree that *Der Tor und der Tod* is still "egoistic" in being concerned primarily with problems of the soul, then the addition of the necessary theatrical or communal element in the realization of its meaning produces a parallel to my argument above concerning the "Terzinen I–III." Again, the eventual aim is a synthesis of the egoistic and the communal, a realization of each through the other; and again a sense of this aim can be detected in

Hofmannsthal's essays, for example in the idea of the theater (with Duse) as the magical place where a "whole great city" can be transfigured by an experience that is still "personal" for each individual (P1 71). And this point modifies the argument in the last chapter, on a division of functions between the individual and the collective, so as to bring it within the range of criticism strictly defined. For the purpose of the theater as an institution is now understood to be precisely the opening of an area of contact between individual and communal experience, where each is enabled to intrude upon the other at a high level of consciousness, where the individual spectator, without compromising his individuality, is offered a direct intimation of the truth that "my portion is more than just this life's slender flame or tight lyre" (W1 54; G 19).

3

In 1897, however, Hofmannsthal undergoes a developmental crisis, the result of which is a movement in the direction of the mimetic as opposed to the lyrical or "egoistic." Especially in the plays collected as *Theater in Versen*, there is a tendency toward greater complexity of plot, toward an emphasis in dialogue on characterization rather than thought as such, and toward a certain epic breadth in the world imagined. On what level and to what degree does this crisis involve the basic idea of the theater?

The shift toward the mimetic is not a repudiation by Hofmannsthal of his own earlier production, but a natural outgrowth. If it is necessary in life to affirm and exploit the difficult situation of self-consciousness, rather than attempt to transcend it, and if this attitude in turn implies an affirmation of finite, empirical reality, then the consequence for the artist is a commitment to realism, to "Gestaltung" rather than "Magie." The artist, of all people, knows most clearly that reality is in truth a mental or poetic act, composed essentially of metaphors; but he also knows what Claudio learns from the ghosts, that his metaphysical knowledge is useless as mere knowledge, that the truth is an empty truth, relating to nothing, except insofar as we put it behind us in favor of an absurdly committed activity by which its quality as truth is realized. Therefore the artist, in spite of his knowledge, must carry out the absurd act of treating the world *as if* it were real; in developing a mimetic style Hofmannsthal only applies to himself the lesson taught in his own early works. But the mimetic mode is also less esoteric than the

lyrical, more communicative, in a sense more social, and so approaches again the synthesis of the personal and the communal that had already determined Hofmannsthal's early idea of the theater. We shall therefore not expect to find that idea changed much in *Theater in Versen*.

The change is in fact mainly a change in emphasis, which we can define by tracing, in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, the theme of the relation between creator and thing created. In 1895 we still find Hofmannsthal insisting that the actor Mitterwurzer exercises "an absolute power [Gewalt] over people" (P1 231), which reminds us of the "power" supposedly exercised over our souls by Duse. But a couple of years later, in the poem "Zum Gedächtnis des Schauspielers Mitterwurzer," though we still hear of "Gewalt," it is not in the sense of an absolute control over the movements of our inner life. The phrase is now "Gewalt des Lebens" (W1 83; G 48), "power of life"; the artist is imagined no longer as dictating our thoughts, but as representing and revealing nature at large, as somehow himself *becoming* a mountain that we look up to with childish eyes. Our thoughts remain our private concern; the artist's task is to provide us with the material, the backdrop, the atmosphere, the space for thought.[6]

Hofmannsthal never actually asserts that poetry operates by controlling the conscious movements of its audience. But something close to that assertion is implied by the interpretations above, especially of the "Terzinen" and *Der Tor und der Tod*, where the apprehension of the work's basic meaning involves, for the reader or spectator, the execution of certain relatively intricate dance-figures in consciousness. And in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, a definite concern about this implication is suggested by the theme of creator and creation, by the relation between the Baron and Cesarino, or between Vittoria's own idea of her singing and its outward effect, or between the senile Passionei and his music. In each case it is emphasized that the creator or procreator, once the act of creation is finished, no longer has any special control, or even knowledge, with regard to what he has brought forth. The Baron is interested in Cesarino, but not impressed by his fatherhood in the sense of authority. Vittoria's interpretation of her art, that it is merely an extension of the Baron's existence (D1 210), is a private feeling and has nothing to do with what listeners (among them the Baron himself) experience. When the Baron asks her to talk about herself, she answers, "Didn't you hear me sing?" (D1 209). He does hear her sing, but obviously does not hear what she imagines is

her singing's content, whereby we are reminded of the ironic discrepancy between the visionary "Prolog" to *Die Frau im Fenster* and the play's actual tendency away from the visionary. And then Vittoria herself says of old Passionei, who is now only interested in light, heat and food, "we have the music he created, his breathing is no longer required" (D1 242). What the artist creates no longer belongs to him at all, but has become mere material for the mental activity and feeling of others.

And yet, on the other hand, *can* the artist renounce his dictatorial intentions with respect to our experience of his work? In reality it is clearly impossible to dictate in detail the reactions of an audience; but if we exclude this idea, it is difficult to see what the artist's *purpose*, vis-à-vis his audience, can be. Even in conversation we inevitably attempt to dictate the reactions of others – however clearly we understand the futility of this attempt – and can we imagine that the dramatic poet is less concerned with his audience than we with our cab drivers? In *Der Tor und der Tod*, even the spectator's inevitable intellectual detachment is anticipated and exploited by a complex irony that is meant not merely to dictate his reactions, but to modify his very sense of identity. Now, however, in *Theater in Versen*, Hofmannsthal apparently wants to come to terms more directly with the unavoidable *accidental* element in the effect of a work of art, with the fact that the work will be used by its audience in ways the artist cannot determine, with the recognition that art's power is at best the "power of life," not a specific dictatorial control over people's thoughts. Of course the problem is not solved by a mere concession to mimetic conventions. If a "zero degree" of drama or a "static drama" or a "negative" drama is actually to be achieved, then much more drastic measures are required.[7] What is interesting here is Hofmannsthal's self-critical sense, his unfailing focus upon the point at which his own project is most questionable.

4

But problems or no, Hofmannsthal presses on, and the basic principle of dramatic writing in *Theater in Versen* remains essentially what it had been earlier: revelation of the nature of human existence by an unmasking of the theatrical situation as a reality realer than real. The spectator must be induced, as in *Der Tor und der Tod*, to discover a significant answer to the question of what he is doing in the theater; and in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, the

answer to this question is suggested by the play's main theme, the idea of *living a lie*, as it applies on differing levels of consciousness to the Baron and Vittoria, to Lorenzo – who cannot but have some lingering doubts ("Fang ich aufs neue mich zu quälen an?" [D1 258]) – and even to the unknowing Cesarino, whose very naiveté may lead him in his father's footsteps.

The connection between this idea and our situation in the theater is established via the motif of Vittoria's singing, the art by means of which she repeatedly expresses the truth about herself while at the same time concealing it. This art of life, this concealment by revelation or revelation by concealment,[8] is not only a symbol, but also figures in the plot. Lorenzo's suspicions concerning the Baron had first been aroused by a subtle change in Vittoria's performance (D1 184–5), and Cesarino, when he is also disturbed by Vittoria's evident nervousness ("Du bist nichts als ein Schwindeln, / in einen dünnen Schleier eingewickelt" [D1 236]), then says to himself, after she steps away from him, "Her walk is different. I won't be reassured until I hear her sing" (D1 237). If the fragile web of Vittoria's present existence is to be kept intact – she *is* "nichts als ein Schwindeln," in the sense of "Schwindeln" as "deception" – then both Lorenzo's and Cesarino's fears must be calmed, which means that Vittoria must reattain the full magic of her singing, as she does at the very end.

The key dramaturgical point, however, is that although Vittoria's singing is crucial in the play's action and structure, *we, the audience, never hear it.* Our attention is strongly drawn to this point. Vittoria has already indicated that singing will be her "armor," her way of maintaining her composure when the Baron arrives at her house (D1 217); on the day itself, Marfisa is sent to fetch Vittoria's music (D1 236–7), whereupon the musicians arrive and tune their instruments (D1 238–40); and then, not once but twice (D1 241–2), they play an introduction up to the point where Vittoria must begin – only to be interrupted both times. This is not a meaningless background diversion. It is a serious matter; the claims made for Vittoria's singing, both in itself and in the plot, are such that if she were ever actually to sing on stage, if we were in a position to judge her singing for ourselves, the whole dramatic structure would collapse. There is obviously no singer who could do justice to Vittoria's own lengthy and extravagant description of her art: "they say that my voice is a bird sitting on a branch of heavenly glory . . . " (D1 209) – or at least no singer who we could agree had done justice to it. But the fact that Vittoria's singing therefore

cannot be realized on the stage is not in itself disturbing. What disturbs us is that a special point is made of twice bringing us to the very brink of the impossible, that our awareness of the limits of theatrical representation is thus insisted upon. What purpose is served by this insistence?

Clearly a sense of the *fragility* of the theatrical illusion is conveyed. We are made aware that by sitting in the theater and accepting its conventions, we too are living a kind of lie that can be exploded at any moment. When Cesarino says that Vittoria is "nothing but a precarious vertigo, a walking dizzy-spell" – with the unwitting pun on "Schwindeln" in the sense of "deception" – she answers, "My friend, that is only what we all are"; and this is the general truth of which our situation in the theater is a symbol, not a symbol presented to us but a symbol of which we ourselves, here and now, are the very material. We find ourselves involved, with the author, the actors and the other spectators, in a kind of precarious and dizzying conspiracy to preserve an illusion that contains its own refutation and is constantly on the verge of being exposed. The parallel between stage and theater is perhaps not insisted upon quite so strongly as in *Der Tor und der Tod.* In the earlier play we recognize that what we are doing in the theater is *exactly* what Claudio is doing, deliberately confronting ourselves with the idea of death in order to achieve a sense of astonishment at existence. In *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin* room is left for an accidental element in the relation between spectator and work. Each spectator, like each of the various characters, is living in real life his own personal lie, and it is the complex general parallel with the theater and with the fiction that is exploited. But the technique, the creation of a parallel between the fictional action and the situation in the theater, as well as a further parallel with our general situation in life, is the same.

Therefore we must ask again: what are we doing in the theater? *Why* have we bothered to go in the first place? If the stability and integrity of our existence always depend on the maintenance of a falsehood, why should we deliberately seek out a situation in which we are forced to think about how precarious our existence really is? This is not an artificial question generated by the argument, but a real one in the text, for it is equivalent to the question of why the Baron returns to Venice despite his enemies, why Vittoria visits the Baron despite the danger to her hard-won security, why Lorenzo pushes toward a crisis, first by inviting the Baron to his house and then by insisting that Vittoria tell the Baron about Cesarino (DI

243), though only a few moments earlier he had asked her not to (D1 237).

In the case of the Baron and Lorenzo, the answers to this question are neatly symmetrical. Danger is necessary for the Baron, for it gives him an increased sense of vitality: "to pour wine, to eat, sleep, and kiss, and to hear outside the door the rough breathing of someone who is waiting with death clutched in his fist" (D1 174). And Lorenzo, on the contrary, courts danger in order to convince himself that he is safe, that what he fears is not true after all. But Vittoria desires neither of these things; she seems in fact hardly aware of the danger involved in her visit to the Baron. All she wants is a few moments of peace, as it were "on a quieter shore" (D1 217), in which to be herself with the one person in the world before whom she has no secrets.

And yet, whereas neither the Baron nor Lorenzo achieves what he seeks, Vittoria, who is not seeking anything from the danger she creates for herself, ends by achieving *both* a heightened vitality *and* a deepened security. When danger actually arrives for the Baron he does not revel in it, but loses his nerve and so is forcibly reminded of his vital decline ("Bin ich schon so schreckhaft!" [D1 219]), which is precisely what the thrill of danger is supposed to make him forget. Lorenzo, on the other hand, as he leaves with Cesarino, says to Vittoria about the Baron, "I know how foolish my worries were; you never loved that man, even in a dream" (D1 263). His certainty, however, is groundless; even if the story that has been fed him were true, it would not exclude Vittoria's having loved the Baron. The energy with which he embraces this delusion is only part of his elation at the news that the Baron is leaving town. At least Lorenzo will not have to *see* him again. It does not represent a genuine security.

Vittoria, however, has been made both more alive and more secure by her perilous visit to the Baron. She tells him the next day that she had come to him as "your possession, your foolish creature [Geschöpf]," and she now thanks him for having given her back her *self*-possession by failing to recognize his power over her (D1 270). Even on a strictly practical level, her visit to the Baron increases the security of her domestic situation; when the Baron arrives, Lorenzo is *comforted* to observe, "Ah, she greets him like someone she had seen and spoken to last evening" (D1 242). But she also thanks the Baron for having reawakened her youth, her vitality, her ability to feel herself a mere "creature," hence her ability to sing the aria of Ariadne at the end.

These elements of the plot have a direct bearing on the question of why *we* endanger ourselves, why we go to the theater, why we insist on coming as close as possible to the truth, when the truth itself is that all life is essentially the living of a lie. The figures of the Baron and Lorenzo, together with the basic parallel to our own situation suggested by Vittoria's almost-singing, indicate that it is both wrong and futile for us to *expect* from the theater either a form of intensified vitality or a form of satisfaction with the relative security of our daily existence. The spectator should seek neither complete emotional submergence in the dream-world of the stage nor mere support for his everyday identity, but rather a state somehow precariously balanced between these extremes. Somehow the spectator must approach the drama as Vittoria approaches the Baron on her visit, as its "creature," fully within its power, yet also able to resist its power, as Vittoria resists the Baron's "Be mine again" (D1 210). And somehow, the plot suggests, this approach promises us both a heightened vitality and a more self-assured mastery of our general situation. But precisely how?

5

Lorenzo cannot live without being deluded, whereas Vittoria is capable of managing her existence in full knowledge of the gulf between life and truth. She says to the Baron that her true relation to him and Cesarino belongs to the "inmost kernel" of her soul, that it is "the secret of my life, and all else the mere empty shell" (D1 248). But only a few moments before, she had compared her love with Lorenzo to "a precious stone embedded in rock-crystal, which has a healing power and, from within, compels the crystal to grow around it like a living thing" (D1 247). The metaphor of kernel and shell, essence and accident, center and surface, produces a direct contradiction between the two speeches. If Vittoria's existence has a true center at all, then – on mathematical grounds, so to speak – it can have but one such center, one still point about which its deceptions and contradictions revolve. But unlike Lorenzo (who in this respect represents the Kleistian type), Vittoria is not troubled by mathematical impossibility; both speeches, both metaphors, obviously express truth, though each falsifies the other.

The difference between Vittoria and the Baron, on the other hand, is that she commits herself to the living of only *one* contra-

diction, *one* lie – hence the validity of the kernel-metaphor after all – whereas it is his nature always to live a new one. This difference is unfolded in an unacknowledged struggle for Cesarino, who evidently has an adventurer's nature; Vittoria admits as much in her first long speech about him (D1 243–5), and his fascination with the Baron confirms it. Like the Baron, he knows instinctively that life "is nothing but play" (D1 257), and he is therefore in danger of leading a life composed of mere fragmented rôles. But Vittoria claims that he is proof against this danger; if "modesty," as she fears, cannot prevent him from taking advantage of people, still "love can" (D1 245). This hopeful diagnosis, that Cesarino is more basically like his mother, willing and able to assert unity in his play-existence, is also confirmed. When the Baron reveals the unsound character of his way of life, in the words, "swift change is the loveliest intoxication," Cesarino becomes suddenly meditative and replies, "Ja, das – und viel – Doch irgendwie / muß dann das Leben *immer* so – " (D1 256), "somehow life must *always* . . . " This sentence is never finished and quickly forgotten, but it indicates a concern on Cesarino's part for constancy in life, for its totality and unity, a concern that is clearly his maternal inheritance.

The position of Vittoria between the Baron and Lorenzo thus expresses an *ethical* point, the idea that while it is wrong to delude ourselves about the ungenuineness of our existence, still we must also overcome our ungenuineness by insisting on existence as a single organized whole. And this point is related to the question of the audience's attitude toward the drama. If we lose ourselves utterly in the artistic illusion, then we simply surrender to the play-character of existence and relinquish all consistency in ourselves, like the Baron;[9] but if we do not lose ourselves at all, then we simply deny the play-character of existence, like Lorenzo. Vittoria's position, in the middle, thus corresponds to the paradoxical union of alienation and identification that we have seen is envisaged even by young Hofmannsthal in the response of a theater audience.

It follows, moreover, that the accidental element in the relation between audience and drama is now central to the play's meaning. Our participation in upholding the dramatic illusion is an acknowledgment of the play as a true image of our own lives, hence of the play-character of existence. But this particular play, in its closed mimetic organization – as opposed to the ironic openness of *Der Tor und der Tod*, our recognition there of *our* hallucination on the stage – stops short of engulfing our existence, or of seeming or

pretending to do so, even for the time we actually spend watching it. While the idea of living a lie maneuvers us into the condition of "creatures" of the theater, still the work's mimetic closure also forms a boundary against which the familiar cohesion of our lives outside the theater remains present to us; and this familiar cohesion is now meant to be experienced as a creative act on our part, an active opposition to the chaos of a life thrown open unreservedly to the truth. We are still *ourselves* in the theater, yet also more deeply and knowingly ourselves than elsewhere. As in the case of *Der Tor und der Tod*, alienation is a crucial element in the theatrical process. But alienation is now not a ritual gesture, required in the erection of a new quasi-divine identity for the spectator; it is grounded, rather, in the persistence of the spectator's ordinary, extra-theatrical identity. The spectator, that is, like Vittoria, must here learn to manage an existence with two separate and conflicting centers.

Our sitting in the theater is thus an *ethical exercise*, an exercise in being like Vittoria, at once both fully aware that life is a lie and fully determined to make of this lie a single affirmable reality. And this exercise in turn makes available to us Vittoria's achievement of both heightened vitality and deepened security. For it is only by way of an acknowledgment of the truth that we can arrive at a genuine confidence in the stability of our lives, as opposed to a state of fragile delusion like Lorenzo's. But as in the "Reiselied," it is also only by way of our commitment to the creation of ordered reality that existence *becomes* truly dangerous and awakens us to a sense of our own vital energy. Again, therefore, the effect of the play is identical with the type and degree of alienation experienced by the audience in the theater.

At least this argument defines the manner in which the theatrical poetics of *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin* (which I take to represent all of *Theater in Versen*) is meant to supersede that of *Der Tor und Der Tod*. But the question of whether it is actually a more complete or consistent poetics remains open. The quality of the audience as a community, for example, appears to have lost in importance, except perhaps as representing the fabric of interpersonal agreement necessary for the establishment of realistic or mimetic conventions. Moreover, although Hofmannsthal is now aware of the philosophical difficulties that accompany the attempt to impose a particular attitude on his audience, still it is clear that an attempt to manipulate us is present in *Abenteurer* anyway, especially in the use of the motif of Vittoria's singing and in the

ethically prescriptive diagram created by placing Vittoria between the Baron and Lorenzo. Thus a tension arises that calls into question the adequacy of dramatic form as such, with respect to its own demands on itself. In *Abenteurer*, any attempt whatever to determine the audience's position must falsify the meaning; for the play is not a metaphysical exercise like *Der Tor und der Tod*, but an ethical exercise that depends on our freedom, on the accidental element in its relation to us. Hofmannsthal now wishes to integrate his theater not into an ideal community of artistic ritual, but into a real society composed of people who will complete the poetic vision in unpredictable ways. The question of whether such a theater is possible, however, is not yet answered by *Theater in Versen*.

6

Again, the idea of the communal or social makes us aware of a lack in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, where the theater is not used as a symbol with the same clarity as in *Der Tor und der Tod*. Perhaps the mimetic integrity of the play is meant to correspond to our ordinary social reality, as the single illusion we agree upon conventionally with others; but this idea is abstract and tentative by comparison with the force a more philosophical idea of community receives from Claudio's yearning for participation. In relation to *Der Tor und der Tod* and the goal of uniting the egoistic and the social, I think it is evident (on hindsight) that *Abenteurer* represents at best a development toward the social and dramatic complexity of *Der Schwierige*.

This is not the only line of development leading from *Abenteurer* toward *Der Schwierige*. In *Cristinas Heimreise* the adventurer type represented by the Baron is not merely discredited but faced with a refutation that arises from its own nature, in the opposition between Florindo the seducer and Tomaso the ship's master. An adventurousness of ever-changing masks and moods is opposed to an adventurousness of dogged self-assertion amidst a fantastic array of natural and human perils; an adventurousness of self-dispersal is opposed to an adventurousness of self-concentration that now desires the peace of family and children. And in the end, Cristina is not only content with the captain, but chooses him freely; after her last meeting with a Florindo whose interests now lie elsewhere, she thanks the captain specifically for having presented her with that choice (LI 258). We are perhaps reminded of Vittoria's thanks to the Baron for "returning her to herself" and

making possible a more stable relation with Lorenzo; but the parallel is not exact. In the first place, Tomaso is himself a kind of adventurer, whereas Lorenzo is anything but. And in the second place, Vittoria is never in a position to commit herself entirely to Lorenzo; by staying with him she continues to live the lie, to live – since she is thus herself an adventuress – in the orbit of the adventuring Baron. What we have in Tomaso is the beginning of a new adventurer type who can find his way to the stability of marriage; and the culmination of this type, the achievement of a worthy male counterpart to the three adventurous but earnest heroines of *Theater in Versen*, is Hans Karl Bühl.

But throughout this development the fundamental principle of dramatic writing remains the same: the creation of significant resonances between the artistically closed world of the stage and the mundanely open reality of audience and theater, with the aim, ultimately, of effecting a complete reconciliation of the individual and the communal, the artistic and the social. This principle is present from the beginning, and Hofmannsthal's development is an unceasing struggle with its implications.

Part II
LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

7

CHANDOS AND HIS NEIGHBORS

I intend now to work toward an interpretation of *Der Schwierige* based on the idea of language and society as *primary* realities that generate our individual existence, rather than realities that arise as the cumulative result of individuals' existence or actions. Society, in this view, is not an association of individuals; language is not a device used by individuals for communication. Our individuality, rather, is in truth merely an organ by which the social and the verbal realize themselves.[1] This priority of the collective is already a logical consequence of the division of functions between individual and collective consciousness in the poems and early plays; for if collective consciousness were not prior, there would be only a quantitative sense in the distinction. But the logical necessity of an idea is not the same thing as its adequate evocation in the theater, which I contend *Der Schwierige* aims at. The theater is thus rephilosophized in *Der Schwierige*, while the goal of actually throwing it open to social reality – the new tentative goal of *Theater in Versen* – remains out of reach, approachable only by the drastic and dangerous artistic strategies I will discuss in Part III.

I

Shortly before starting work seriously on *Der Schwierige*, Hofmannsthal says of *Elektra* and *Jedermann*, "In both the concept of personality is questioned, the root of the psychological-dramatic" (P3 354). And several years later he applies the same judgment to different works: "All of my pieces adapted from antiquity have to do with the dissolution of the concept of individuality" (A 201). In the notes for Scandinavian speeches, from which the first quotation is taken, the collapse of the concept of the individual is understood as part of a European intellectual development toward the idea of "the ego as a manifestation of forces, in its passive as well as in its active aspect, which are synthesized,"

toward a "purified conception of personality, as a glowing center of force and love" (P3 367). The idea of the ego's quality as a manifestation of prior forces is here more positive than it had been under Mach's influence earlier, and also perhaps more religious than social, tending more in the direction of the *Großes Welttheater* or *Der Turm*; indeed, the whole attitude of the Scandinavian notes is rather too Prussian to suggest *Der Schwierige*, except perhaps negatively. But if we turn back to Hofmannsthal's earlier wartime utterances, we find a more characteristically Austrian version of the same general thinking:

> Ostentation, otherwise so repugnant, is now eminently proper. What used to be empty pretence, our sociable obligations, now *is something*. What was once arrogance and peremptoriness is now a duty. Every cheerful word fulfils an important obligation, every witticism is now a small feat. (P3 179–80)

This does strongly suggest *Der Schwierige* – unruffled high society in wartime.[2] In periods of intellectual or political crisis ("Politik und Geist" being "identisch" [P3 190]), those little social acts, which to a Prussian (say, a Neuhoff) must appear mere individual caprice, are revealed as a higher duty, on a level transcending the individual.

The idea of ostentation as a duty does not yet imply an overcoming of the concept of the individual. But the article in which it occurs, the "Appell an die oberen Stände" of 1914, has a much more authentic ring than the politically tendentious Scandinavian speech-notes of two years later, especially in the dichotomy on which it is built, the idea that it is necessary to find a way between the "Scylla und Charybdis" (P3 176) of excessive patriotic enthusiasm and excessive detachment, a way of taking the wartime situation seriously but somehow not too seriously. This problem is practically identical with the problem of dramatic alienation that had occupied Hofmannsthal for over twenty years, the problem symbolized in Vittoria's position between the Baron and Lorenzo, Ariadne's between "metamorphosis" and "loyalty" (P3 138), Jaffier's between Belvidera and Pierre, in Electra's position between Chrysothemis and Orestes, between the normality of her sex and the outrageous necessity of her deed (P3 354), and even in the Madman's position between a sober physician and an enthusiastic servant. The "Appell" is not merely an occasional journalistic piece, but belongs to the main flow of Hofmannsthal's artistic thinking.

I will argue that the skilful steering of a course between this Scylla and this Charybdis, between enthusiasm and sobriety or identification and alienation or dissolution and petrifaction, comes to be understood not only as an ethical duty, but primarily as a philosophical exercise that is needed in order to master the idea of language and society as realities prior to the individual ego. This idea, if we attempt merely to think it, lies strictly beyond our comprehension. We cannot stop experiencing ourselves as individuals; even if I sacrifice myself utterly to a social cause (we recall Claudio's friend), it is still "I" who carry out the sacrifice. True mastery of the problem of egoism and community requires a poetic or theatrical strategy that circumvents mere assertion or argument.

Thus we return to the thought of Part I, to the idea that the true aim of lyric poetry is to reveal the inherent poetic nature of language in general, and that the true aim of drama, by way of the situation in the theater employed as a symbol, is to reveal the metaphysical depth of our ordinary communal existence. In both poetry and drama Hofmannsthal seeks a communicative strategy outside the limitations of what I have called conceptual language. For it is manifestly absurd to state as a fact that the divine act of world-creation is carried out by every individual in every moment; the idea of the "individual" as the agent of human acts must somehow be eliminated from this statement. And in now following Hofmannsthal further into the problems created by the quest for valid poetic form, we find ourselves tracing the essential genesis of *Der Schwierige*. *Der Schwierige* is entangled in a problematics of its own; but the poetic theories of language and of social existence are at least fully integrated with one another in that comedy, and the result is something like a distillation of problems, a revelation of the single enormous insoluble problem that for Hofmannsthal at once generates and vitiates all Western poetry, the problem of its relation to reality or experience in the simplest possible sense.

2

The place to begin dealing with Hofmannsthal's ideas of language and society, as these bear on the idea of individuality, is the Chandos letter. Not much attention has been paid to the following sentence in which Chandos describes his existence after the crisis:

Seither führe ich ein Dasein, das Sie, fürchte ich, kaum begreifen können, so geistlos, so gedankenlos fließt es dahin; ein Dasein, das sich freilich von dem meiner Nachbarn, meiner Verwandten und der meisten landbesitzen-

den Edelleute dieses Königreiches kaum unterscheidet und das nicht ganz ohne freudige und belebende Augenblicke ist. (P2 13–14)

Since then I have led an existence so empty of intellect or thought that I fear you can hardly form a conception of it, an existence, to be sure, that is practically indistinguishable from that of my neighbors, my relatives, and most land-owning nobles of this realm, and is not entirely without its joyful and enlivening moments.

From this point on Chandos occupies himself with describing, as best he can, "what makes these good moments" (P2 14). But I think we ought first to be worried by the above sentence itself.

How does Chandos mean that his existence differs hardly at all from that of his neighbors? Does he perhaps imagine that his neighbors and relatives also experience the mystical transports he is about to describe? There is no indication in the concluding relative clause that the second pronoun "das" does not have exactly the same range of reference as the first. I suppose we can insist that Chandos is comparing only the outward aspect of his existence to that of his neighbors' existence, although the word "äußerlich" is absent. But if we read as literally as possible, then part of what he is saying is that the experience of the *typical* English aristocrat – or at least of those who, unlike Bacon, have not pursued an intellectual career – contains the mystical dimension he is now learning about.

Is it even conceivable that Chandos is attributing mystical experience like his own to the large class of people he names? The existence in which such experience occurs is "geistlos" and "gedankenlos," which is to say, essentially, *wordless*, as Chandos implies he himself soon will be. There are therefore no grounds for denying out of hand that such experience is undergone by the large majority of people who have no special interest in the intellect, since they in any case would not talk about it. Like Chandos, they go about their daily business, keeping up appearances, not even confiding in their families; for the mystical area of their lives, assuming it exists, does not admit of verbal expression – or indeed positively denies itself verbal expression. There is no external sign by which we can judge whether someone is a mystic in Chandos' sense; for all we know, anyone could be. Chandos himself seems an exception, which we can perhaps explain by imagining that at the time of writing he is still in transition from intellectual to mystical life, and so still has the desire and ability to articulate what he undergoes. Or we might even ask: does he, after all, *talk about* his mystical experiences, which are by nature beyond the reach of language? Does it not

follow that even in talking about them, he fails to talk about them, that his talking is already a kind of silence? In any case, he will not write again; he will now abandon even the pretence of a relation between his mysticism and language, and so become indistinguishable from the rest.

Or to look at it another way, the question of whether Chandos' visions can be typical of a class of people includes the question of whether the life he is on the verge of is vitally cohesive and stable, whether it is the sort of life in which a large number of people *could* participate. This question is answered by Hofmannsthal himself when he classifies the Chandos letter as representing one "way into existence" (A 215); for "Existenz" refers to a viable and relatively permanent state, by contrast with the fleeting ecstasy of "pre-existence." There is thus no reason to suppose that in Hofmannsthal's view, Chandos' mystical epiphanies are not vitally and communally justified; in fact, if the terminology of "Ad me ipsum" is reasonably consistent, they must constitute the approach to an objective "connection with life" (A 214). Moreover, with reference to "speech as a social element, as *the* social element," Hofmannsthal places the "Brief" one step beyond *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* on the way from *Der Tor und der Tod* to *Der Schwierige* (W3 705; A 231), on the way, that is, to comedy and "the *achieved social*" (A 226); conceivably, then, the "Brief" is meant to afford us a revelatory perspective on social existence. Nor is it difficult to see the relation between Chandos and *Der Schwierige* if we think in terms of "the decorum of silence" (A 215); beneath the surface of social existence (we might argue) there are experiences, like Chandos' illuminations, that we simply cannot talk about, and the integrity, the "decorum" ("Anstand") of social existence is our silence on these matters. Hence also the letter's failure to discuss in detail the extent to which mystical epiphany is shared in society. Chandos is developing from an intellectual into a social being, a person who says less than he knows; he is already practicing the decorum of silence.

There are many people, however, who presumably do not share Chandos' experiences: Francis Bacon for one, and in all probability Hofmannsthal's reader as well. For we, like Bacon, are intellectuals; if we were not, the Chandos letter would hardly interest us to begin with. And our being intellectuals means that the character of our experience is influenced, not to say determined, by the habitual working assumption that concepts and realities reflect each other more or less exactly, which is why Chandos cannot

communicate with us concerning his recognition that reality and the "Verhältnisspiel" (P2 13) of concepts are entirely unconnected; in the very act of understanding him, we would misunderstand.

But we must not for this reason assume that Chandos' visions represent a loss of contact with all reality that is experienced by others. The rubric in which Hofmannsthal places Chandos is "Intro-version as a way into existence" (W3 704; A 215). Chandos is not a Claudio who insists perversely upon thinking of "life" as a kind of mood that he cannot hope to perpetuate, but rather he achieves a *state* of life ("Existenz") no less valid than our own. "The mystical way" (W3 704; A 215) of Chandos and "the nonmystical way" (A 217) of deed–work–child are two different approaches to existence, perhaps in a sense two different realities, but neither is preferred by Hofmannsthal as the more genuine. What Chandos undergoes *is* reality, a reality to which we intellectuals blind ourselves by measuring experience against the coordinates of conceptual thought. Chandos himself suggests this, with a delicacy that foreshadows "the decorum of silence," when he describes to Bacon "an existence you can hardly form a conception of"; for it is precisely the Baconian activity of "conception" that *excludes* one from what Chandos means.[3]

One objection to this idea, that Chandos is on the verge of a viable form of existence that need not be unique with him, is that he himself suffers under it, that he lives "a life of scarcely believable emptiness" and must work to conceal his true feelings from others (P2 17). But Hofmannsthal never says that "Existenz" implies satisfaction; in fact, those figures who are too content with themselves are the ones caricatured in the comedies as not having attained "das Soziale." Moreover, Chandos' irony compels us to think of him as still in transition: "The moments of elevation in the Chandos letter" still belong to "The ambivalent state between pre-existence and life" (A 216). In writing the letter Chandos still necessarily occupies an intellectual perspective on himself, and precisely the intellect cannot do justice to what he is talking about. His judgment on his life's "emptiness" is thus no more definitive than the judgment Neuhoff pronounces on Hans Karl: "There is nothing in him that stands examination [Prüfung]" (L2 231). Chandos is still applying to himself, as Neuhoff does to Hans Karl, the wrong sort of "Prüfung."

Chandos' ambivalent position between intellectual and nonintellectual existence is the root of the letter's irony. The very existence of the letter is a paradox, for Chandos gives in language a

clear and reasonable account of language's inability to give a clear and reasonable account of anything.[4] This basic irony is then reflected in verbal complications, for example Chandos' description of the occasion

> when this combination of nothings [the beetle swimming in the watering-can] fills me with such a thrilling immediacy of the infinite, fills me from head to foot, that I want to burst out with words about which I know that if I discovered them, they would pull down to me those cherubim I don't believe in. (P2 16)

Can one "know" about beings one does not believe in? The presence of this type of absurdity relativizes all Chandos' definite statements. When, after writing his letter, he falls silent, when he pulls free of the "indecent self-overestimation" of speech (L2 258), when he actualizes his situation as "fate," he will presumably have attained an entirely new point of view toward himself, from which it is by no means necessary that his existence will still seem "empty" to him. Then, however, a situation will have been established that we can no longer even think about, since it by nature avoids contact with the intellect, much as Hans Karl simply overlooks the existence of the famous Professor Brücke. Then those cherubim will perhaps exist after all.

3

If Chandos is on the verge not merely of an aberration but of a permanent and normal mode of existence, then the difference between Bacon and him, between verbal articulation and "thinking with the heart" (P2 17), becomes a distinction between two actual classes of people utterly unable to communicate with one another, thus a *tragic* distinction, revealing an eternal incompleteness in the human condition. Only by a communication between intellectual articulateness and social "decorum of silence" could human nature be experienced as a totality; and such communication is impossible. That this problem is equivalent to the technical problem of realizing what happens in the theater as both a philosophical ritual and a model of society, is clear enough. And one way of circumventing the technical problem is simply to acknowledge its insolubility, to exploit the communicative impasse as itself the core of a poetic–theatrical vision, a tragic self-reflection of the theater. This is what Hofmannsthal attempts in his large-scale tragedies.

But for the time being, let us concentrate on the problem in its

philosophical aspect, in the Chandos letter. What Chandos had earlier *striven for* by way of intellect, he now *achieves* in the immediacy of experience. Concerning his youthful plan to articulate the inner wisdom of ancient myth, he says he had wanted "to disappear in those naked gleaming bodies and speak in tongues out of them" (P2 9). And in the case of the poisoned rats, he actually does flow out of himself ("hinüberfließen") into another existence (P2 15), perhaps not so beautiful an existence as he had earlier imagined, but one still describable via classical allusions. Or again, of his earlier "enduring intoxication" he says:

> Everywhere I was in the midst, never confronted with mere appearance. Or I had the feeling that everything is metaphor, every creature a key to the others, and that I was the person who could take hold of them one at a time and unlock as many of the others as could be unlocked. (P2 10–11)

And later this image is repeated almost exactly, the "keys" to existence being now "ciphers" or code signs:

> I feel a rapturous, utterly infinite interplay in me and about me, and none of the interplaying essences is such that I could not flow into it. It is as if my body were nothing but ciphers that unlock everything for me. (P2 16–17)

What the intellectual strives for, in other words, the non-intellectual possesses; "this harmony that weaves together myself and the whole world" (P2 17) is exactly what the abortive "Nosce te ipsum" (P2 10) had aimed at, an understanding of the world leading to an understanding of the self.[5]

But one thing is missing in Chandos' mystical achievement of his earlier intellectual goals. He now lacks *mastery* over his vision, the ability to shape and communicate it, which had been an integral part of his desire. He becomes one with the dying rats, but he cannot "speak in tongues" out of them or decipher in them "the hieroglyphs of a secret inexhaustible wisdom" (P2 9); he now possesses the "keys" to existence, but he cannot "take hold" of them for they are his own body. He is on the verge of "Existenz," and "Magical control over the word, the image, the sign, cannot be carried over from pre-existence into existence" (W3 705; A 215–16).

What the intellectual strives for but can never attain, the non-intellectual possesses *but can make no use of.* There is no way of telling whether any person is a mystic in the sense Chandos is; such people appear perfectly ordinary, for nothing is accomplished by their inspired knowledge. This is what Mann's Tonio Kröger finds

at once attractive and intolerable about "ordinary" people, that they have what the intellectual would give anything for, a direct perception of the perfect wholeness of being, but show no sign of appreciating what they have. Hofmannsthal, however, is concerned less with the agony of the intellectual than with the tragic discrepancy itself. In the *Buch der Freunde*, he quotes Goethe's remark that the person who stands "at that point of existence" which a poem happens to treat will be neither satisfied by the poem, "because he knows better," nor even amused, "because he is too close to the material to see it as a whole [ein Ganzes]" (A 74–5).[6] The intimate perfection of knowledge entails loss of the ability to master knowledge as "ein Ganzes," while on the other hand, to be a poet, to strive for the verbal mastery of knowledge in artistic totalities, to seek existence "through the work" (A 217), therefore involves the renunciation of a perfect or intimate knowledge like Chandos'. This situation would be merely unfortunate, not tragic, if perfect knowledge were unattainable. What is tragic is that the "Weltgeheimnis," "world-secret," not only is knowable but *is known*, while he who desires it, the intellectual, must renounce it in the very act of desiring. The tragic truth, as Laidion says, is "daß solches auf der Welt ist, und ich *habe es nicht*!" (P2 319). What the intellectual most deeply desires exists in the world, but in the one place he can never reach it, in the fundamentally non-intellectual life of Chandos and his neighbors, where its possessors derive no advantage from it. This is the implied tragic vision of the Chandos letter.

4

The artistic range of this point can be measured in Hofmannsthal's own tragedies. In *Elektra*, for example, as long as the world remains imperfect, as long as retribution remains unexecuted, as long as the desperately sordid situation of the play's opening persists, Electra can still articulate her condition. But when she actually experiences the event she had imagined, as Chandos in his visions experiences the world-totality he had speculated on, when her vision of justice is actually fulfilled, she can speak no longer. Her joy struggles for expression, but a "twentyfold ocean" weighs upon her (D2 74). This ocean, or "the burden of happiness" (D2 75), corresponds to the "immediacy of the infinite" that will silence Chandos. There is triumph in Electra's collapse at the end, but there is also a continuing sense of tragic imperfection, an "absence

of light" (B2 132) that apparently frightened Hofmannsthal himself; it is simply not right that Electra be denied any advantage from what she has sacrificed everything for. And this imperfection or unrightness, which is foreshadowed by the unfulfilment of her vision of herself as present at Clytemnestra's death (D2 40–1), and by her failure to provide Orestes with the fateful weapon,[7] reflects an essential imperfection in the human condition. Again, those (like Chandos) for whom the world somehow actually becomes perfect necessarily lose the ability to make use of their ecstatic knowledge; truth and justice are realizable, but lead nowhere when realized, for the intellect collapses under their weight. Electra's "loyalty" (A 217) is expressed in her willingness to go ahead *even* when the realization of her desire becomes possible. She is an intellectual, like Hamlet (A 217), in a world "out of joint"; but unlike Hamlet she does not hesitate when her opportunity arrives, even though she cannot exist in a world grown perfect, as intellect in general cannot exist in the actual presence of truth. The "Ironie" (A 217) Hofmannsthal sees in *Elektra* is manifest in what I have called the continuing sense of tragic imperfection; but this irony only emphasizes the idea of "Treue," Electra's unswerving insistence upon a perfection that is absolutely irreconcilable with her intellectual mode of being.[8]

Das gerettete Venedig, like *Elektra*, elaborates the tragic possibilities established in the Chandos letter, but from the opposite direction. Like Electra, Jaffier is an intellectual, a man for whom words count as much as things; first Pierre and then Belvidera (W4 33–6, 107–11; D2 114–18, 220–6), by the mere verbal evocation of future possibilities, succeed in persuading him to commit himself drastically. But Jaffier cannot face the imperfection of intellectual existence. It is significant that what moves him to betray the conspiracy is not the knowledge that it is doomed to fail, but the relatively minor episode of Renault's attempt on his wife's virtue. It is as if Electra were to warn Aegisthus away from the house merely because she has not yet succeeded in giving Orestes the buried weapon. Jaffier imagines a kind of perfection to be realized even by the eventual failure of the plot (W4 108; D2 221); what he cannot tolerate is that his *vision* should fail, that the other conspirators should turn out to be less than "brothers," and in this he is contrasted with Pierre, who proceeds with his design even though it means allying himself with Bernardo Capello, whom he despises (W4 46, 53; D2 132–3, 142). Jaffier, once the *idea* of the plot has been sullied for him, snaps at the intellectual bait offered him by his

wife, unlike Pierre and Electra who remain steadfast amid confusion, and unlike Chandos, who accepts the necessity of a new mode of existence based on the decorum of silence.

Another aspect of *Das gerettete Venedig*, however, faces forward toward the Oedipus-plays. Jaffier's joining the conspiracy, like Oedipus' self-exile from Corinth, is the attempt to avoid a fate of which he is already aware, his fate as a victim of the state of Venice. But like Oedipus' decision, Jaffier's actually only seals his fate; in fact the attempt to avoid his fate becomes an integral part of the fatal mechanism. Here Jaffier's path and Oedipus' diverge. Jaffier is persuaded to make a second attempt to avoid his fate, whereas Oedipus (though tempted by Iocaste as Jaffier is by Belvidera) pushes forward steadfastly with his questioning until he achieves his ruin, and affirms thereby that he had already achieved his ruin by inquiring (of the oracle, earlier) into the truth concerning himself, and by acting on the basis of an intellectual, therefore confused apprehension of that truth. But the idea behind both plots is the same: that intellectual calculation, in the attempt to master one's fate, is itself the mechanism of fate. To an extent this pattern is also present in *Elektra*, if Electra's compulsion to work out the *idea* of justice is understood as parallel to Oedipus' insistence on an answer from the oracle.

In *Elektra*, however, the focus is upon the self-sacrifice of intellect for the sake of an order it envisions, while the idea of intellect as the source of confusion is expressed only in the play's sense of continuing imperfection. In *Das gerettete Venedig* the sense of imperfection becomes dominant; the plot is nothing but confusions and the very title is ironic. Only in the re-creations of the Oedipus myth does the pattern emerge in full clarity. The operation of intellect is now understood as the source of an apparent disorder (the plague at Thebes) which in the course of things, in that intellect steadfastly proceeds, is resolved into a higher order; and from the still basically confused or truthless point of view of intellect, this higher order can only take the form of catastrophe.

Thus, if we persevere in our original hypothesis, that Chandos is on the verge of a normal and viable form of existence, so that the disjunction between knowledge of the truth and intellectual desire for the truth becomes a real problem in the world (not merely the melancholy supposition that truth is unattainable), then the tragic development through *König Ödipus* can be understood as a working out of material already present in the "Brief." The life of Chandos the mystic is not different from that of his neighbors,

except insofar as he has arrived at it by an unusual route. Chandos the poet, before the crisis, had not only lived life but also tried to master it intellectually, had thus confused himself with respect to it, and had thereby brought about a situation in which ordinary life, the natural fitting-together of things that other people presumably take for granted, must reveal itself to him as catastrophe. What in the "Brief" is still an internal process, ending in the catastrophic collapse of a way of thinking, appears in the tragedies as external action, but the process is the same. Chandos is doomed, as we all are, to live ordinary life; but he also tries to gain intellectual mastery over it, whereupon ordinary life (say, the beetle swimming in the watering-can) assumes overwhelming proportions and *takes on the character of fate* for him. Oedipus is doomed from the start to a particular fate, but he also attempts to master that fate intellectually, whereby his fate is made to realize itself, *to take on the character of fate.* Or in general terms: the world is at base orderly, truth has real existence; but the operation of intellect creates for us a confused point of view from which the true and real order of things takes on the overwhelming or catastrophic character of fate. "Therefore a man must await the last day in silence, in complete silence" (W8 184; D2 487). Truth exists in the world; but he who strives for it, the intellectual, must renounce it in the very act of striving. If he insists absolutely upon truth, then the truth can and will realize itself for him, but only as catastrophe. The alternative is silence.

This is tragedy for Hofmannsthal: that the truth concerning the ultimate inward order of being, the substance of Chandos' visions, can be known by anyone, but is not expressible or usable, that there is no medium of communication between those who know the truth and those who need to know it. In the "Brief" this tragic sense is manifest in Chandos' exemplary agony, at the crossroads of two equally valid but wholly disjoint forms of existence; and there are echoes of this situation throughout Hofmannsthal's career as a tragedian, at least up to the 1925 version of *Der Turm*, where the scene with the gypsy woman corresponds to Chandos' mystical visions. Sigismund has been attempting, by calculated action, to resolve chaos into unified order, to establish mastery over the apparently confused world. Now, however, like Chandos, he reaches his goal in an unexpected way, in the form of a vision that resolves all separations of time and space into perfect "immediacy." Chandos, in this situation, is faced with a choice. He could conceivably try to make use of his visions, he could strive for

intellectual mastery over them by becoming a new kind of poet,[9] but he chooses instead the decorum of silence. Sigismund is faced with the same choice when dead Julian speaks to him of "the new language" he has learned, which says "the Upper and the Lower together" (D4 186). This is also the language Chandos dreams of, "in which mute things speak to me" (P2 20); but Sigismund, though he claims to know, or at least know of, such a language, remains "a general in his tent" (D4 187). He rejects the decorum of silence and tries instead to make use of his vision in strategic calculations, as intelligence concerning Olivier's death. Like Oedipus, he continues to operate as an intellectual in a situation where intellect can no longer maintain itself, and the realized order of things destroys him.

The technical or theatrical aspect of this thought, finally, is not difficult to see. The idea of an intellectual mastery of fate corresponds to the quality of the theater as ritual, to drama's inevitable if futile attempt to dictate the reactions of its audience. The idea of ordinary social life as an unacknowledged mysticism corresponds to the quality of the theater as society, to the unfulfillable if inevitable imperative – why else does the genre exist in the form of social events? – that the performance of drama, including our presence as spectators, simply *be* an intensified version of our social existence. And tragedy thus becomes the theater's tragic reflection on its failure to reconcile these irreconcilable aspects of itself, on its insuperable insufficiency relative to its own human mission. Or to look at it the other way round, the insufficiency of the theater is itself exploited as a symbol of the basic tragic disjunction in human nature. The problem of the theater, as Hofmannsthal had seen it up to this point, is thus in a sense solved; theatrical symbolism is no longer invalidated by its insufficiency. But the solution is also an admission of defeat, containing no possibilities for development. It is like truth for Chandos; when one has it, there is nothing further one can do with it. This is the technical aspect of the Chandos-and-tragedy phase considered as a crisis.[10]

5

The Chandos crisis is generally understood to be the result of forces long present in Hofmannsthal's thought and development. But while it is true that young Hofmannsthal had worried about the applicability of language to the reality of life, he had also seemed firmly in command of this problem. The question of intellectual

mastery over fate, in particular, is one we have already dealt with, in arguing that self-consciousness is by nature an intellectual attempt to overcome death, while at the same time it is also the source of our experience of death and so dooms itself to endless failure. This tension, however, is the very *structure* of our conscious life and the source of all articulated orderliness in the world. In the early poems and plays, as in the "Brief" and the tragedies, the true eternal union of man and nature is therefore always achieved, though it eludes any attempt to lay hold of it directly, like the eternal Italy of the "Reiselied." What new factors come into play, to turn this difficult but relatively stable philosophical situation into a crisis?

Up to about 1900, Hofmannsthal thinks of the human condition primarily as an instantaneous configuration, the paradox of the soul, which by definition we enact in every instant of life. Part of the meaning of the "Reiselied" is that human existence begins anew in every instant, and the key to *Der Tor und der Tod* is our understanding that the absurd situation into which we are maneuvered in the theater is a situation in which we always find ourselves anyway by being human. Toward the end of the 1890s, however, Hofmannsthal begins to apply to himself the thinking of his own early works, and one result is a shift toward the mimetic; the human condition, metaphysically considered, includes the necessity of an absurd commitment to finite existence, which means that the artist must himself make such a commitment, must resolve to treat the world as if it were externally real, despite his metaphysical knowledge to the contrary. But it also follows that the artist must now treat *time* as though it were real. Time can be reduced philosophically to a mental event; but time appears to us as a reality, and this appearance is part of the absurd creative act on which our existence is founded, an act from which the artist may not pretend to exempt himself. Therefore the artist must treat the human condition not only as instantaneous, but also as temporally extended; he must ask not only whether the human condition can be comprehended or fully experienced, but also whether it can be supported over time.

This question is already foreshadowed in *Theater in Versen.* Sobeide, for example, stands between her husband and Ganem in the same way Vittoria stands between Lorenzo and the Baron. The merchant is not as jealous as Lorenzo, but he shares Lorenzo's inability to endure a marriage that involves imperfection or insecurity, which is why he relinquishes his claim to his wife. And Ganem, like the Baron, is a forgetful lover from whom his nocturnal visitor

must learn that the passionate truth she has been concealing is not true except in her own mind. Like Vittoria, Sobeide is thus placed between the recognition of life as merely an empty game we invent for ourselves and the necessity of nevertheless creating unity and cohesion in life. She is driven to kill herself by a sudden confrontation with the whole paradox of the human condition; and the ethical exercise implied both here and in *Abenteurer* is an exercise not in experiencing the truth but in *supporting* it.

In the "Brief," however, the question is developed and made more difficult: not merely, how is it possible to support the truth at a particular point in life? – which is the question raised in *Theater in Versen*; but rather, how is it possible, in the face of truth, *to build an individual existence over a length of time*? Only in the light of this question does the distinction between intellectual and non-intellectual existence make sense, since every person, instantaneously considered, is already both a non-intellectual (in the relation to his own self-wholeness, which is implied by the very concept of the instant) and an intellectual (by virtue of his self-consciousness). The question that distinguishes the intellectual from the non-intellectual is the question of how we use our time, whether we regard time as a medium for the attainment of knowledge and the creation of order in existence. What marks Chandos the poet as an intellectual is not merely that "all existence" had appeared to him "a great unity" (P2 10) – for this remains true even after his collapse, in the mystical visions by which his earlier desires are realized – but rather that he had made "plans" for the poetic mastery of that unity, plans that now seem incomprehensible to him (P2 9). The element of extension in time is crucial here. What dooms Electra is not merely that she desires order, for we desire order in every thought we think, but that in the course of years she has sought to divest her being of all substance except that desire, in the form of the desire for a particular realization of justice. And what dooms Oedipus is a long series of acts – all directed at the creation of order (as ruler) and at the achievement of full knowledge about himself – by which his fate is eventually made to take on the character of fate.

We can now understand why the Chandos crisis is a crisis. As long as we think of human existence in terms of instantaneous or typical activity, the situation of the poet presents no special problem. The poet as metaphor-maker or paradox-thinker or ironist merely does on an unusually high level of consciousness what all people do anyway, and his existence is problematic only in the normal human manner, if perhaps more so. But once we think

of existence as temporal extent, the poet becomes the intellectual *par excellence*, separated perhaps even qualitatively from such others as the historian or scientist (e.g. Bacon); for the poet's life is devoted to the resolution into verbal order not merely of a particular area in the world, but of the *whole* world, including his own person, experiences and feelings. "Nosce te ipsum" is his motto.

And the question that arises now is that of the cumulative effect of such striving. Every instant of self-conscious existence represents an attempt to master the human condition intellectually, even though such mastery is unattainable; but this experience of repeated failure is simply our experience of transience and can be tolerated as such. The question now facing us (and Hofmannsthal) is: what happens to the individual who imposes upon his whole life the hopelessly striving character of the self-conscious instant? And the answer is that he inevitably arrives at a crisis; the very success of his striving must take the form of catastrophic failure, as it does for Chandos, Electra and Oedipus. Existence *is* basically orderly, and an individual who devotes his life absolutely to the creation of order will eventually achieve his aim; but in doing so he will realize a pure contradiction and so effect his own ruin. Here, too, the technical analogy is clear. The problem of the theater is solved in Hofmannsthal's tragedies, but solved in a manner that casts doubt on the theater's very reason for being. If there can be no realization of human totality in experience, why should there be a theater in the first place? Order is achieved in the tragedies, but only at the price of its being recognized as futile, just as Chandos' knowledge of truth is useless in the domain of language. Is Hofmannsthal, then, like Chandos, a poet in ruins?

We observe again the typical pattern of Hofmannsthal's development, the conscientious application of his own works' lessons to himself. The consideration of human existence in terms of temporal extent is a logical consequence of his own earlier magical thinking, as is the shift toward the mimetic. But this new thinking, when applied to himself as a poet, confronts him with a problem that calls into question the very idea of a poetic career.

6

What, therefore, is the *alternative* to intellectual existence? The non-intellectual cannot avoid being self-conscious, but he presumably avoids taking the inevitable intellectuality of self-

consciousness too seriously. He is, in other words, a social being, like Hans Karl, who in describing the clown Furlani actually describes his own fascination with the "tricks" or "intentions" ("Absichten") of others (L2 221), whereas the intellectual strives to realize his own intention, to subordinate one thing after another to his idea of order. The true non-intellectual is a person of whom it can be said "that he has respect for himself and for everything in the world" (L2 220), a respect even for the apparent inconsistency in things, even for their otherness.[11]

But can these ideas be applied to Chandos the mystic? I have spoken of Chandos as being "on the verge" of silence, still "in transition" from intellectual to social being, for in the letter itself he still seems to be operating as an intellectual. But Richard Brinkmann points out that the idea of silence and its opposite is not so simple.

> There is no solid, definable identity between human reality and the word. There can be none.
>
> Only the path of indirectness is open, the paradox of surrender to this language while still relativizing or negating it . . . What Kierkegaard knew is also the wisdom of *Der Schwierige*: "Silence concealed in silence arouses suspicion . . . But silence concealed in a decided talent for conversation, that, as sure as I live, is silence."[12]

Does this argument not apply to Chandos as well as to *Der Schwierige*? Chandos seems to be using the language of intellect; but the undercurrent of irony in the letter suggests that intellect is here merely a mask, the appropriate *social* device for addressing someone like Bacon, an intellectual Baconian "trick" that expresses not mockery but "respect" for what it imitates. If this is true, then Chandos is already actually using "the language of obliging but unobliged conversation."[13]

The point is perhaps impossible to decide conclusively, since the significance of the irony of social language is precisely that what lies "behind" it can no longer be known directly by language. But given what we have already understood about the tragic in Hofmannsthal, the *absence* of a middle ground between intellect and knowledge of the truth, it makes better sense to infer that the intellectual stance of the letter is ironic than to suppose that Chandos is somehow half-intellectual, half-visionary. And if it is objected that Chandos too obviously struggles with his ideas, that he lacks the self-assurance of the conversationalist, I will respond that this can be said of Hans Karl as well, who struggles with every

idea that occurs to him. Only the contrast with other characters, Neuhoff and Stani especially, shows that somehow Hans Karl manages not to take his talking too seriously, that he exists more deeply than he speaks. That one is a social being like Hans Karl, not a committed (if shallow) intellectual like Neuhoff, does not imply that one is sure of oneself. Again, therefore, there are no critical grounds for denying that Chandos has completed his transition to social existence, that his life is now integrated with that of his non-intellectual neighbors, and that the letter, while serious, is also ironic, a form of "Konversation" rather than intellectual truth-seeking. But if these points hold, then we may no longer assume that Chandos' agony is a phase that will vanish when he enters "Existenz" wholly; and in order to understand the implications of this reasoning, we must understand the ideas of "Prae-existenz" and "Existenz" a bit more clearly than we have so far. The specific doctrine of pre-existence occurs much later in Hofmannsthal's career than the "Brief"; but the purpose of that doctrine, in "Ad me ipsum," is to elucidate earlier works, which is what we are about, and there is therefore no reason for us to hesitate in applying it.

In any case, it is interesting that Chandos and Hans Karl may be regarded as similar types, similar fictional initiatives. We shall probably agree with Brinkmann that the conception of characters like Hans Karl is a crucial element of Hofmannsthal's strategy for overcoming the Chandos crisis. But if Chandos himself is such a character, then the response to the crisis is already contained in its principal articulation, which is a point I will develop in the next chapter.

7

Before we proceed, there is a philosophical difficulty to be cleared up. My aim, as I have said, is to show the usefulness, in interpreting *Der Schwierige*, of the idea of language and society as realities prior to that of the individual. But the idea of "irony" appears to produce a contradiction, by supposing the existence of a level of experience "behind" language, inaccessible to language but still somehow accessible to the individual. I have already suggested a way around this difficulty, by the idea of the *true* content of language in "Die Beiden." What language can never "say" directly, what we already understand in common before we begin speaking, still *belongs* to language, for it achieves manifest existence (as the visible figure in

the dust) only by way of the apparently futile mechanism of verbal communication. But in the "Brief" the problem is more difficult, for the true content of language, the communal experience behind or beyond language, is also the *actual* content of what Chandos says, not merely a delicate suggestion in an image. In "Die Beiden," precisely the obscurity of the idea of the true content of language, its quality as the result of a complicated process of inference on the part of the reader, belongs to its meaning; the idea is *actually* situated, so to speak, "behind" the language. How shall we account, by contrast, for the procedure of the "Brief," where Chandos expends considerable effort on naming or describing what is beyond the range of language?

It seems to me that an adequate argument on this point is already carried out by Heidegger in *On the Way to Language*, when he discusses Stefan George's little poem "Das Wort." The poem ends by asserting the priority of language, "Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht." "The thing does not exist if there is no word for it." Or perhaps, taking the subjunctive as indirect discourse: "my relation to language suggests (since there is no thought or knowledge beyond this relation) that no thing exists but by way of its word." Or perhaps, taking the subjunctive as a kind of imperative: "it is necessary, in order to maintain an orderly relation to language, that we insist that no thing be where the word is lacking." But what is interesting for our purposes is that the poet, like Chandos, despite his closing assertion about language, does name the thing, the "kleinod reich und zart" (with the adjectives not in attributive position, but as it were tacked on to hold the thing down), the elusive experience whose existence, or at least verbally fixable existence, he then apparently denies. And Heidegger argues (or Heidegger's argument, tailored to our needs, says roughly) that such an impossible naming is *necessary* in order "to bring us face to face with a possibility of undergoing a thinking experience with language."[14]

> But when does language speak itself as language [as opposed to its accustomed speaking "about" other things]? Curiously enough, when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses or encourages us. Then we leave unspoken what we have in mind and, without rightly giving it thought, undergo moments in which language itself has distantly and fleetingly touched us with its essential being.
>
> (p. 59)

In (and by) the process of naming what they affirm cannot be named, however, both George and Chandos do "give thought" to

the experience of looking unsuccessfully for a word, and the result of this "thinking experience" is always the recognition that what is sought for is not *a* word after all, but *the* word, which "can never be found in that place where fate provides the language that names and so endows all beings, so that they may be" (p. 86), *the* word, which is therefore "truly a prize," for it "is in the ... case of not being a being" (p. 87), not being itself locatable in the world that its activity articulates and so brings into being.

The experience or entity "behind" language, which we strive unsuccessfully to bring to speech, is thus always in truth language itself, as a problem, the problem (in my terms) of the priority of language with respect to the individual.[15] For if our discourse moved entirely within the limits of what language "can" say without becoming a problem, then the question of the priority of language would be idle; language would simply be coextensive with the articulated world, prior to our individual existence only in the trivial sense of presumably having existed before our birth, posterior only in the sense of being object to our subject. And on the other hand, if language were not prior to individual experience, if words were simply signs for things that first show themselves without the mediation of language, then obviously Chandos, as a successful language-user, could never arrive at his crisis to begin with. In the very gesture of pointing "behind" language, therefore, the "Brief" *asserts* the problematic notion of the priority of language. Heidegger avoids the concept of "priority" – which tends to confuse the issue by denoting a relation that can become the object of denotation only from "a position above language" (p. 51) – and insists on his own earlier formulation, "Language is the house of Being" (p. 63). But I will not try to match that subtlety. I will continue to speak of "priority" and "primary reality," trusting both myself and the reader to bear in mind the problems in the terminology, and to measure each step of the argument against those problems.

8

To return to our main topic, some commentators on "Ad me ipsum" still regard pre-existence and existence as distinct developmental stages. This view is refuted by a note of Hofmannsthal's that apparently refers to *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Elektra*:

> Gehalt: Übergang von der Prae-existenz zur Existenz: dies ist in jedem Übergang jedem Tun. Das Tun setzt den Übergang aus dem Bewußten zum Unbewußten voraus. (A 226)

Content: transition from pre-existence to existence; this is in every transition, every action. Acting presupposes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious.

Existence, then, is not a state that can be achieved once and for all; rather, the transition from pre-existence to existence occurs *over and over again*, in every transition, every deed. (We are already familiar with this type of thinking, in the idea that human life repeatedly begins anew.) Pre-existence is never past, but always present at least as a possibility; or as Exner says, "Pre-existence and existence, for Hofmannsthal, are contained in each other."[16]

We can understand this situation readily, as long as we bear in mind, in accordance with Hofmannsthal's use of the terms "conscious" and "unconscious," that pre-existence is not characterized by a lack of self-awareness.[17] Intense self-awareness is an indispensable attribute of pre-existence, which "looks down on the world" (A 213) and includes an expressive ability called "magical control of the word, the image, the sign." Kobel, in fact, on the basis of a passage in Kierkegaard that Hofmannsthal must have read, is able to argue that pre-existence not only includes but *is* self-awareness, in the form of a kind of perfected memory.[18] Precisely its self-consciousness makes pre-existence a problem. Consciousness implies a distance between the subject and what he is aware of, so that it is strictly impossible to be conscious of a totality to which one belongs. When we nevertheless achieve (or seem to achieve) such consciousness, therefore, when we are actually able to grasp, in "the word, the image, the sign," the whole of our *own* being, we are performing a kind of magic, the "pure Magie" (A 238) of pre-existence.[19] Nor is this idea at all inconsistent with Hoppe's idea of magic in Hofmannsthal as a "conjuring and fetching-back of the past."[20] The past, thus magically recalled, also implies a state that at once both contains us (in being present) and can be objectively grasped as a whole (in being past).

But such magic cannot endure. As we continue to be conscious of ourselves, we are separated from ourselves by the distance, the perspective that *is* consciousness, and the totality of which we are conscious disintegrates. The only way actually to achieve the totality of which we had been magically aware, a totality to which we must belong integrally, is "pressing ahead out of pre-existence into existence" (A 214), the sacrifice of conscious mastery for the sake of a somehow newly *un*conscious condition. Therefore Hofmannsthal speaks of existence as a return to ourselves (A 216). Our being, our *Sein*, is always a totality; in the state of pre-existence we

are for a moment magically *in command* of this truth, whereas in the state of existence we return to it, by "self-relinquishment" (A 217), in such a way as to be *commanded by it.* "Not knowing the truth, but being the truth" (P3 351) characterizes "existence."

And if existence is a constant return to the same totality envisioned in pre-existence, then it follows that pre-existence is always possible; we need only become fully conscious of what we still after all are. Pre-existence is thus a constant *temptation.*[21] By way of our actions and sufferings the total form of our fate is constantly realized, and since we cannot help but be self-aware, since reflection is our very nature, we are always in danger of attempting to comprehend that total form, to make ourselves magically the masters of our fate – which attempt leads to confusion and disintegration. Therefore Hofmannsthal speaks of "*fate* that can be let slip" (A 225), even though the idea seems to contain a contradiction. Pre-existence is not the same thing as the tragic fate of the intellectual; it is the actual instantaneous *achievement* of mastery over our being, in the form of total consciousness, and is available to anyone at any time, whereas a tragic intellectual existence is the temporally extended quest to establish a mastery over fate *in reality.* Jaffier's life is not tragic but the reverse; his susceptibility to the temptations of pre-existence causes him to "let slip his fate," even though he is still destroyed. The distinction between intellectual and non-intellectual existence is a distinction between two ways of *using* self-consciousness, whereas pre-existence, if we fail to resist the temptation, is an attempt not to use but to *enjoy* self-consciousness as a kind of eternity or quasi-divinity.

We can now understand exactly how Chandos' visions belong to the "existence of most land-owning nobles in this realm." Those visions are the temptations of pre-existence; "this harmony that weaves together myself and the whole world" always tempts Chandos to seek words for mastering it, tempts him to become a new kind of poet; but the letter to Bacon is written for the purpose of refusing to do so. There is thus no contradiction between my present point and what I said earlier about Chandos' being "on the verge" of existence. He *is* now in the state of existence, which means precisely that he is constantly *in transition* from pre-existence, that he must make the transition over and over again. And if we assume that most ordinary people (say, Chandos' neighbors) are in the state of existence, then it follows that something like Chandos' visions must be present in their lives as

well; if existence is the constant realization of the totality of our being, then it must also be a struggle with the recurring temptation to master that totality consciously.

It is now also clear why Hofmannsthal finds it necessary to distinguish two paths into existence, "the mystical path" of "introversion" and "the nonmystical path" which by implication is that of extroversion. For there are exactly two ways in which it is possible to resist the temptations of pre-existence: we either direct our attention forcibly outward into action, refusing to become wholly conscious of ourselves ("action presupposes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious"); or else, like Chandos, we simply give ourselves up to the vision of world-totality whenever it comes upon us. Pre-existence, it must be remembered, is the achievement of conscious mastery over fate, or at least the illusion of such mastery; by becoming a mystic, therefore, by simply *accepting* our visions and letting them pass, not attempting to use or master them in word or deed, we also succeed in pushing through from pre-existence to existence.

It may be objected that Chandos himself refers to his visions not as temptations, but as "joyful and enlivening moments." Precisely this, however, that Chandos prefers his moments of visionary joy to the rest of his life, establishes the significance of his ethical resolve *not* to attempt to perpetuate that joy in the form of art. Despite what he says, Chandos has obviously not lost "the ability to think or speak coherently about things" (P2 11); he inveighs against "Rhetorik" (P2 8), but the letter itself is a veritable compendium of classical figures of speech. Not "ability," but ethical resolve, is the issue. Chandos employs an ethically founded irony when he suggests the idea of a psychological "sickness" in himself; his crisis is ethical, and his inarticulateness, such as it is, can only be understood as a free decision – just as Hofmannsthal's authorial attitude is derived here from an ethically conscientious reinterpretation of his own thinking. Nor is it difficult to understand why Chandos expresses himself ironically or cryptically, rather than in some manner directly. A direct formulation of the insights into existence that have made him renounce the intellect would be yet again an attempt at intellectual mastery over his fate, and so would violate precisely the law of fate that is to be justified. The visionary moments in existence are "enlivening"; they reassure us that life is orderly and significant, a totality. But they are also temptations, for we can retain the knowledge that *existence is orderly* only by irony, only by constantly renouncing any attempt to understand *the order*

of existence; such understanding or mastery of our total being is but the fleeting mood of pre-existence that leads nowhere.

One question remains. Does Hofmannsthal have a specific text in mind when he suggests that mystical vision, or something akin to it, is an integral part of ordinary life? I will not claim to prove anything in this matter, but there are grounds for speculation. Kierkegaard, in the *Philosophical Fragments*, develops the Socratic idea of knowledge as a kind of memory into the idea that every individual mind constantly contains, and at any time can become aware of, absolute Truth. "In the Socratic view each individual is his own center, and the entire world centers in him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God."[22] This idea corresponds both to Chandos' early plan for a "Nosce te ipsum" and to his later visions of universal "harmony"; but Chandos the poet had failed to grasp that Truth cannot be directly communicated, that only "the path of indirectness" is open, that we can never teach the Truth, but can at best be the occasion of someone's learning it for and in himself. Socrates "entered into the rôle of midwife and sustained it throughout; not because his thought 'had no positive content,' but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another."[23] The content of Chandos' visions, then, is that Truth of Socrates and Kierkegaard which must be understood to be present, if somehow suppressed, in the life of every individual. If Hofmannsthal is actually thinking of Kierkegaard, moreover, there is an interesting irony in Chandos' remark on his classical reading, "I avoided Plato, for I was terrified by the perilousness of his metaphorical flight" (P2 13) – as if he himself were not engaged in extraordinary metaphorical flights. From the point of view of Chandos' ethical commitment to existence, the real danger is that Plato, by using the figure of Socrates, comes close to actually teaching that Socratic Truth of which the character is that it can not and should not be taught directly. But again, this speculation has only an auxiliary rôle in the argument. What ought to occupy our attention in the "Brief," I maintain, is the technique of irony itself, which points beyond the Pyrrhic victory represented by the early large-scale tragedies (*Der Turm*, we shall see, is another matter), toward the significantly reconceived dramatic strategy of *Der Schwierige*.

8

WERTHER AND CHANDOS

We have run into Goethe a number of times already, and we will keep running into him, for there are few modern writers of German in whose work Goethe is as immediately and constantly present as in Hofmannsthal's.[1] *Der Tor und der Tod*, for example, in its whole conception, is a rewriting of the opening scene, "Nacht," of *Faust*, a minimally elaborated monologue on self-consciousness that leads in a few hundred lines to death. In the case of *Werther* and the Chandos letter, however, I am concerned not only with the relation between the texts, but with Hofmannsthal's use of Goethe as a personal model in a time of vocational crisis.

I

There is no question that Chandos' crisis reflects a crisis of Hofmannsthal's own; after a decade of astonishing facility and productivity, Hofmannsthal suddenly finds himself unsure of his own verbal mastery. But to what extent does the ironic subtlety of language in the "Brief" already mark the end of the crisis?[2] We have seen that the crisis of a poetic career, in its philosophical and technical aspects, is fully developed only in the post-Chandos tragedies. Requadt suggests, "that the lowered level of style, which is announced in the Chandos letter, is to be found in comedy and in the popular mystery-play"; and he then qualifies this point by insisting that the truly social, "namely a hovering linguistic connection between individuals,"[3] is still beyond Hofmannsthal's reach. But there is already an elegant and controlled irony in the "Brief" itself; especially the numerous hidden allusions to Bacon's works, Chandos' use, in addressing Bacon, of an ironic (but not derisive) Baconese, creates precisely "a hovering linguistic connection" that at once both establishes contact and maintains distance. Hofmannsthal himself, on the matter of "speech as the social element," draws a direct line from *Der Tor und der Tod*, through *Der Kaiser*

und die Hexe and the "Brief," to *Der Schwierige*, and sees no need for an intermediate term between the last two. The full fifteen years between Chandos and serious work on *Der Schwierige* thus represent a puzzle. Why, after having mastered his language-crisis brilliantly in the "Brief," does Hofmannsthal not proceed more directly to the comedy of conversation?

I think this question has already been answered. Hofmannsthal experienced a language-crisis around 1902; but the more serious developmental crisis of this period stems from a poetic and ethical hesitation caused by the logically inevitable problem of how an intellectually committed existence (a poet's career) can extend in time without destroying itself. It is this problem that informs the major works closely following the "Brief," the gloomy intellectual tragedies of Electra and Oedipus (which lack their respective second and third parts, in which the gloom supposedly would have been dispelled)[4] and the gloomy, confused non-tragedy of Jaffier. It is this problem that inspires in 1902–7 the large number of essays and dialogues on literary subjects. In both the symbolism of tragedy and the logic of criticism, the problem is *how to be a poet.* Hofmannsthal is still (or again) a writer; language serves him now as well as it ever had. What must be restored is his confidence in the usefulness and possibility of *poetry* as he had understood it in his own early work, the creation of an enduring verbal order in which truth somehow magically dwells as an experience. Conversation comedy has to wait until it can be founded solidly on poetic vision, a vision as metaphysically complete, and symbolically and dramaturgically as compact, as that of *Der Tor und der Tod.*

But there is also a discrepancy between perspectives here. From our point of view, and from Hofmannsthal's later, the Chandos letter is a crucial piece of preparation for *Der Schwierige*; indeed, the author of the "Brief" seems to be standing at the very brink of his later achievement. But what does the "Brief" represent for Hofmannsthal at the time of his writing it? My point is that he originally means that document to occupy a *negative* relation to his own development, as a catharsis, in order that the organic, Goethean unfolding of a poet's mind and soul, having purged the paroxysm of Kleistian self-doubt, might resume its natural course.

2

The Chandos letter is meant to function as a kind of *Werther* for Hofmannsthal, as therapeutic self-expression employed by the poet

to get a disturbing experience out of his system. In both the "Brief" and *Werther* we have letters written by an emotional individual in a period of crisis to a friend whose temperament is evidently more rational and composed. But there are deeper affinities as well. Chandos, in his earlier productive period, had experienced a sense of harmony between self and nature comparable to Werther's at the beginning of the novel. Werther writes:

> my friend! when the dusk gathers about my eyes and the world around me and the sky repose complete in my soul like the figure of a beloved, then I often think with longing: oh if only you could express that, if only you could breathe into the paper what lives so fully, so warmly in you, and make it your soul's mirror, as your soul is the mirror of infinite God! – My Friend – But this is ruining me, I succumb beneath the glory of these visions.
>
> (10 May)[5]

The last words here could be taken as a diagnosis of Chandos' case: a feeling of harmony with the whole of nature, a desire to express that harmony in overpowering works of art (the pre-existential temptation to strive for mastery), the growing recognition that this desire is a hopeless "presumption" (P2 11), and the resulting collapse "unter der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen."

Or we think of Werther's complaint, "That you people ... always have to say: that is foolish, that clever, that is good, that evil!" (p. 65; 12 Aug.), which reminds us of Chandos' "inexplicable rage" at hearing, "this affair has ended well or badly for so-and-so, sheriff N. is a bad man, preacher T. a good man" (P2 12). Chandos is driven to view all such simple judgments "from uncannily close up"; like brooding Werther, he lacks "the simplifying eye of accepted custom" (P2 13). Experience floods in dangerously upon both characters, unimpeded by such conventional buffers as, for example, religious belief, which Werther twists into an excuse for deeper suffering (p. 130; 15 November), and which for Chandos belongs "to those spiderwebs through which my thoughts fly outward into emptiness" (P2 11).

But the essential parallel between Chandos and Werther is suggested most clearly by a passage in the dialogue "Über Charaktere im Roman und im Drama":

> There are no experiences except the experience of one's own nature. This is the key that opens for everyone his lonely dungeon, whose impenetrably thick walls, to be sure, are hung with the phantasmagoria of the universe as with colorful tapestries. No one can get out of his own world.
>
> (P2 38)

This echoes Werther's remark, "that all reassurance on certain points of inquiry is only a dreaming resignation, a painting of the walls that imprison us with colorful figures and bright perspectives" (p. 14; 22 May); and the same letter then speaks of man's "feeling of freedom, and that he can leave this dungeon whenever he will" (p. 16), by which is meant the freedom to end one's life.

And if Werther therefore in the end does succeed in breaking out of his prison, the same, and with the same double-edgedness, may be said of Chandos. Balzac, in Hofmannsthal's dialogue, is concerned mainly with the artist's existence, which he compares to that of a ship's stoker, shut up in his fiery work-room: "The artist is no worse off than any other mortal ... But his fate is nowhere except in his work. Nowhere else should he seek his depths and his heights" (P2 39). And this is another diagnosis of the Chandos crisis. Chandos is an artist who, by calling his art into question, has burst open the tapestried prison or shell of his accustomed work-system and now finds himself confronted with the sheer realness of things in all its absurd incomprehensibility. He has broken out of himself, thrown himself open to a flood of reality that he cannot hope to master in form, and it is no accident that his name recalls the Greek adverb χανδόν, "greedily, wide open." Like Werther's, Chandos' catastrophe is a form of self-destruction, of the artist if not of the whole person; like Werther, Chandos achieves exactly what he had been striving for, but in a way that does him no good. His achievement, like Werther's, is a kind of freedom, now truly "outside the preserve of rhetorical tricks" (P2 9), a freedom from the artistic game of language; but this freedom (at least from an artist's point of view) is then revealed as the freedom of "emptiness" (P2 17).

3

My aim, however, is to show not only that the character Werther is related to the character Chandos, but that the function of *Werther* in Goethe's life is a model for the intended function of the "Brief" in Hofmannsthal's. With this in mind, let us look at Hofmannsthal's correspondence with Andrian. Hofmannsthal sends Andrian a manuscript copy of "Ein Brief," "because just this work, which is not a poetic work, has a strong personal element, and you will be able to read it in part like a letter written by me that you had found on someone else's desk."[6] Andrian answers:

Let me remark that the poetic trappings, the relocation in an England of the past, were not to my taste – since you had no intention of transforming your substratum in a poetic manner, it seems to me that a direct account would have been more suitable and effective – and precisely because of the quality of confession, I was put off by the historical tinsel.

(H/LvA, p. 158)

And to this, about four months after his first letter, Hofmannsthal replies:

I will raise an objection to only one of the points you make. Namely you say that I should not have used an historical mask for these confessions or reflections, but should have presented them directly. Actually I worked in the other direction. In August I spent some time with Bacon's essays, found the intimacy of this epoch enticing, dreamed my way into the manner in which *these* people of the sixteenth century perceived antiquity, felt the urge to do something in *this* verbal tone – and the content, which, in order to avoid coldness, I had to borrow from my own inner life, was added *afterward* [kam *dazu*]. (H/LvA, p. 160]

Even apart from the contradiction with his earlier letter, this last account does not ring true. The experience Hofmannsthal insists he had chosen more or less at random, as an excuse for using the form, the Chandos experience, "where I do not know what there is in common between me and a poet" (H/SG, p. 164), had in 1902 already plagued him for years and was now getting worse. Why the effort to make light of this situation to Andrian?

Given the affinities with *Werther*, I think Hofmannsthal clearly wants to convince himself that the writing of the "Brief" had been therapeutic in the way Goethe claims the writing of his novel had been. It is interesting to compare Goethe's description of the genesis of *Werther* in Book XIII of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Goethe begins, like Hofmannsthal, with a discussion of his reasons for interest in the epistolary *form*,[7] and proceeds then to a general treatment of "that disgust at life" (p. 209) for which this form is particularly suited, along with the explanation that "such gloomy observations" were awakened in himself and his contemporaries mainly "by English literature" (p. 212). Gradually he approaches the idea of suicide, but still in general terms, and when he becomes specific, in the story of his own dagger, he quickly gives his relation a humorous turn: "finally I had a good laugh at myself, discarded all my hypochondriac idiocies, and decided to live" (p. 220). Still, he concedes, in order to get the idea of suicide out of his system once and for all, he had had to master it poetically; and at this point the

"real" subject of *Werther*, Jerusalem's suicide, had crystallized matters for him – whereupon, almost as an afterthought, he adds that at the time of writing *Werther* he himself, "all over again," had gotten into "an embarrassing situation" (p. 221), by which he means the situation in the house of Maximiliane Brentano. It is only in the words "all over again" ("schon wieder"), or in the remark that the situation with the newlywed Brentanos was one that "held out even less hope than the previous ones," that we are reminded of Lotte Buff, who is of course a much realer subject of *Werther* and whose story, in the previous book (pp. 150–8), had been given in tantalizing but not quite sufficient detail to make this obvious. Generality leads ever deeper into confession, but leaves the center, the real confession in *Werther*, almost untouched; and this feature of Goethe's account is perhaps meant to *demonstrate* that the writing of the novel had accomplished its task as "Generalbeichte" (p. 225), after which the painful subject matter need not be dealt with again in detail.

The similarities with Hofmannsthal's second letter to Andrian, down to the insistence on English literature as a more important influence than personal experience, are clear enough; and we are again reminded of Hofmannsthal when Goethe discusses the effect *Werther* had had on his friends: "True, it was again the content that created the effect, so that their attitude [the friends'] was exactly the opposite of mine; for I, in this composition more than any other, had rescued myself from the stormy elements" (p. 225). Hofmannsthal adopts toward Andrian the same tone of gentle reproach for being too concerned with "the content" which now, reposing in the finished work, is supposedly a thing of the past. The only major feature of Goethe's account that seems not to be echoed in Hofmannsthal's, is the lengthy discussion of the place of *Werther* in cultural history. I say "seems," however, because later in the letter Hofmannsthal directs Andrian's attention to his just-published Balzac dialogue (H/LvA, p. 161), where the content of the Chandos letter is treated as a cultural phenomenon. Balzac "prophesies":

> By 1890 the intellectual disorders of poets, their overdeveloped emotional sensitivity, the nameless anxiety of their periods of depression, their disposition to succumb to the symbolic power of even inconspicuous things, their inability to content themselves with existing words in the expression of their feelings, all this will be an epidemic among young men and women of the upper classes. (P2 40)

The dating of this phenomenon back to 1890 serves to include the whole of Hofmannsthal's career, and so accords not only with my point that the Chandos crisis is referable to the simple quality of being a poet, but also with Hofmannsthal's statement in 1902 that his periods of unproductive depression are nothing new (H/SG, p. 163).

These points perhaps do not demonstrate conclusively that Hofmannsthal was thinking of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* when he wrote to Andrian. But his attitude in the second letter, his insouciantly transparent covering of his tracks – as if there were not almost a logical contradiction in the idea of first deciding upon a "verbal tone" and then, "in order to avoid coldness," coolly selecting a personal experience to put into it – is unmistakably Goethean. And knowing Hofmannsthal, I think we can say: consciously Goethean.

The Chandos letter may perhaps represent Hofmannsthal's ethically based rejection of a certain type of poetry, the radically asymmetrical expressionistic poetry that Chandos the mystic would require in order to capture his illuminations.[8] But the letter is not a repudiation on Hofmannsthal's part of his own earlier works, or even a renunciation of the form of lyric. On the contrary, it is his attempt at a Goethean self-catharsis, in order to revive in himself the lyric productivity that had already been in decline for several years. If this point is not clear from the argument so far, it ought to be clear from "Das Gespräch über Gedichte," which ends on a note of distinct if tentative hope: "Und dennoch entstehen solche Gedichte ..." (P2 96). Again, the problem is one of perspective. From Hofmannsthal's point of view later, or from ours as critics, it is clear that the "Brief," as social language, is a decisive step in the direction of *Der Schwierige*. From the point of view of its own writing, however, precisely that social language, in its ironic quality, its Goethean acceptance of its own contradictions, is meant to operate cathartically and reopen the possibility of lyrical and tragic forms, forms focussed more directly than comedy upon metaphysical truth.

4

Tarot remarks that the poem "Vor Tag" makes a mockery of any strict separation between pre- and post-Chandos periods in Hofmannsthal. And he is right to argue against taking the "Brief" as "an about-face 'suddenly decided upon,' which implies a 'break' in

the poetic development, especially since the much cited crisis can be demonstrated as a permanent symptom in Hofmannsthal's writing and thought from the beginning."[9] But on the other hand, he takes at face value that second letter to Andrian, which needs to be handled with at least as much care as Goethe's assertions in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.[10] And though it is probably true that Hofmannsthal's knowledge of Bacon and sixteenth-century English writing in general was as broad as Tarot assumes,[11] it is not true that Hofmannsthal's attitude was as pedantic as Tarot suggests when he says: "Chandos is a lyric poet with no lyric poetry. For lyric in the sense I mean [the expression of 'pure subjectivity' as a 'form of knowledge'] lies beyond the historical horizon. A poet of 1603 knows nothing about the lyrical form of lyric."[12]

While a strict dichotomy between lyric in an established rhetorical convention and modern subjective "Erlebnislyrik" may be in some degree applicable to the history of German poetry, it is certainly less so to the English tradition. Moreover, in just that section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* which Hofmannsthal probably had in mind, Goethe cites as an example of the deep melancholy in English poetry not only Shakespeare, but even such a rhetorically stylized poem as Milton's *L'Allegro*.[13] Goethe's thought here represents a characteristic poet's attitude toward sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, comparable to the attitude of some modern English poets, and certainly comparable to Hofmannsthal's general attitude toward earlier literature, his constant search for resonances by which to develop his own creative situation. Hofmannsthal did not think of poetry as historically progressive, or of his own age as the supersedure of past ages, in the way Tarot tries to make him think.

Indeed, if the Chandos letter suggests that certain types of experience – typically modern types, according to Hofmannsthal's Balzac – are not available as the content of poetry, if the letter thus opposes the wrenching apart of poetic form that certain experiences would require, then surely the idea of an established rhetorical convention must receive positive value. "Form das Erhaltende" (A 127). Hofmannsthal's own poetry, after all, though radically ambiguous when we get into it, is always rhetorically conservative on the surface. The Chandos letter, again, is not autobiographical in the sense that it depicts a phase in its author's development; Hofmannsthal neither became nor wanted to become a poetically unproductive mystic. The letter is meant to be autobiographical in the sense that *Werther* is, as a catharsis, in

order that its author might return to where the character can return no more. By depicting in minute detail the bursting forth of a creative mentality into a fruitless "all-too-much of freedom" (P4 29), Hofmannsthal attempts to get this Chandos experience out of his system; and by depicting Chandos (as he emphasizes to Andrian) in poetic form, he attempts to put his own basically conservative creative mentality back together again. The question of whether a conservative poetic attitude can be maintained, the question of whether the poet as a true intellectual (rather than a quasi-mystic, hence only a quasi-poet) can continue to exist, remains open; but the direction in which Hofmannsthal hopes to find an answer is clear. He himself, in the "Brief," does insist on the verbal mastery of experience, even an experience that includes the recognition of the futility of such mastery.

5

The "Brief" is two things at once, an admission of crisis and an attempt to get over the crisis; and if we trace these tendencies in Hofmannsthal's other works, we uncover a whole decade of more or less continuous crisis, from 1897 to 1907. The attempt to get over the crisis is carried out partly in the forms of essay and dialogue from 1902 to 1907,[14] where it appears as an attempted synthesis of the idea of social existence with that of poetic–intellectual existence, thus a resolution of the tragic incompleteness in human nature. Social existence, for Chandos the socially integrated mystic as also later for Hofmannsthal, involves an acceptance of the radical *otherness* of people and things. And in "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" the idea of otherness is associated with poetic symbolism:

> These seasons, these landscapes [in *Das Jahr der Seele*] are nothing but carriers of the *other* [des *Anderen*] . . . In order to find ourselves, we must not descend into our inwardness: out there, we are to be found out there. (P2 82–3)

We perhaps even think of that "draußen," "out there," where Hans Karl had found himself in a dream. In any event, the form of the dialogue on a literary subject, not to mention the forms of open letter and public speech, already suggests an integration of the poetic with the social.

Hofmannsthal's other tendency in this period, to admit the crisis and plunge into a full, cathartic experience of it, with the aim of

mastering that experience in language, is shown primarily in the form of tragedy. That tragedy at this time has ominous personal significance for Hofmannsthal is shown by yet another self-conscious parallel with Goethe. In early 1902, after giving a lecture on "Die Auflösung des Tragischen bei Goethe," Hofmannsthal reports that he had "denied Goethe's ability to write tragedy," and had referred to Goethe's own admission that "he could not create poetically without a pathological personal involvement, and would therefore be destroyed by creating the tragic" (B2 65).[15] As in the case of *Werther* and Chandos, there is a clear personal parallel here. By writing tragedies, Hofmannsthal is aware of descending into his own deepening crisis, as Elis Fröbom descends into the mountain, and so endangering his very existence as a poet. *Das Bergwerk zu Falun* is essentially *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* written backwards; the earlier play is an allegory of the poet's emergence from magic gloom into mimetic clarity, whereas the later one suggests that for the poet there is no escape from the consequences of intellectual existence after all. And not until *Die Frau ohne Schatten* does Hofmannsthal get around, as it were, to writing the *Bergwerk* backwards.

But Hofmannsthal's tragic development is actually already underway in *Theater in Versen*, in the problem of supporting human existence rather than just experiencing it (*Sobeide, Abenteurer*),[16] and in the stark vision of *Die Frau im Fenster*: we spend our lives looking out on the sunlit variety of things, expecting a fulfilment that never arrives, whereupon a curtain opens behind us, as it were within us, and reveals what we have in truth been waiting for. Then come the *Bergwerk* and the plan for a dramatized *Pompilia*, "das große figurenreiche und tragische Stück" (H/AS, p. 149) which was meant to deal "realistically" with a moral subject.[17] In each of these works, however, the tragic thrust is diverted by the development of a specific type of theatrical interest: the mimetic–ethical in *Theater in Versen*, the fairy-tale theater of *Bergwerk*, the morally based emphasis in *Pompilia* upon a crowded and complicated plot that would probably have turned out no better than *Das gerettete Venedig*. Especially in the last two examples we recognize not a theatrical alienation dictated by the poetic vision, but simply the author's *resisting* a vision he fears could destroy him personally.

Only in *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays is the tragedy of intellectual existence achieved in distilled form; it is only here that a tragic sense of the theater crystallizes, the use of the theater as a living acknowledgment of its own insufficiency. But Hofmannsthal

himself does not appear to be impressed by this achievement. Even after the considerable stage success of *Elektra* he finds that play "intolerable in its monstrous lightlessness" except when considered alongside his planned *Orest in Delphi* (B2 132). Later he softens the personal impact of *Elektra* by associating it with *Jedermann*: "in both plays it is asked: what remains of a person when everything possible is subtracted? – in both it is answered: that by which a person can connect himself to the world is the deed or the work" (P3 354).[18] But the "answer" here does not really address its question, especially with regard to *Elektra*. Even more than a decade after the fact, Hofmannsthal does not face the truth about his own play.

In 1911 he had connected *Elektra* with *Jedermann* in a different manner, in "Das Spiel vor der Menge," which presents the progression from *Elektra* (now supposedly a youthful mistake!) through *König Ödipus* to *Jedermann* as a continuous development in the direction of popular theater (P3 61–2). In fact nothing could be less the case. *Jedermann* is an attempt to rewrite *Der Tor und der Tod* in something like the spirit of Hans Sachs,[19] thus perhaps an attempt on Hofmannsthal's part to put a stop to his own tragic phase by arbitrarily affirming his cultural citizenship on a popular level, as Claudio absurdly affirms life: "[mit *Jedermann*] meine ich, dem deutschen Repertorium ... etwas zurückgegeben zu haben, das ihm von rechtswegen nicht fehlen durfte." But in *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays, cultural citizenship means nothing; everything is stripped away ("what remains of a person when everything possible is subtracted?") to reveal "das Werk" – the accomplished task of justice and retribution – but "the work" in a sense that entails futility, despair, ruin. The theater of *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays is a theater of *naked truth*, of truth as expressed, long before Hofmannsthal, not only in the μὴ φῦναι chorus from *Oedipus at Colonus* but also, interestingly, in Bacon's lines, "What then remains, but that we still should cry, / Not to be born, or being born to die?" The theater itself, as an institution, now wallows in the knowledge of its own futility, of the absolute unattainability of the end upon which its very existence appears predicated, the incorporation of metaphysical knowledge into social existence.

Hofmannsthal's purpose in creating this theater is to bring about for both his audience and himself a type of catharsis, to experience as deeply as possible the whole tragedy of intellect in order somehow to find a way past it. But are these tragedies really drama? Is the technical analogy, the arrival at drama by way of the experience

of its impossibility, really fulfilled? By virtue of their "Lichtlosigkeit," *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays do raise for us the question of what we are doing in the theater, but the answer they suggest is problematic. By going to this theater of naked truth we are doing essentially what Oedipus does; as also in the case of *Der Tor und der Tod*, we are asking ultimate questions about our own existence and encountering the existential consequences of such a questioning. But in *Der Tor und der Tod*, the focus on human nature as a quality of the instant permits us to understand our situation in the theater positively, as a reaffirmation of our necessary absurd commitment to the absurdity of existence, whereas in the tragedies Hofmannsthal is compelled by his reflection upon his own career to operate in terms of the shaping of existence over time, which means that neither Elektra's nor Oedipus' fate, in the small interlude represented by a performance, can be *enacted* by an audience in the way we are enabled to enact Claudio's fate by watching it. Moreover, the necessary disjunction between intellectual and non-intellectual, or tragic and non-tragic existence, compromises the *communal* quality of our experience in the theater; and the quality of naked truth as truth is undermined, not reinforced, by the play-character of the theatrical proceeding. Or to look at it differently, the symbolic declaration, in the tragic plot, that the problem of theater as ritual and theater as social model is insoluble, is not really a circumvention of that problem, but merely a renewed decision in favor of the quality of ritual, since precisely the integration of the theater into society, as a vehicle of pleasure or instruction or progress via criticism, is resolutely denied. Perhaps there are subtler arguments by which these points may be countered and the theater of naked truth justified after all. But if we think in terms of the idea of catharsis suggested by the Chandos letter, it remains clear that the tragic theater, for Hofmannsthal in this period, is a theater in disarray, neither sure of its purpose nor confident of its effect.

Still, the idea of catharsis does not disappear from Hofmannsthal's thinking. The *Buch der Freunde*, for example, includes an aphorism that relates the Aristotelian concept to the distinction between individual and communal experience: "Wondrous is the transition in thought that enables us to observe almost with joy what strikes fear into us as individuals [das für uns individuell Fürchterliche]" (A 46). I will argue in the next chapter that for the time being, after the tragedies, Hofmannsthal does manage to find a justification for continuing to work as a poet. But the still

unfulfilled idea of the tragic, the idea of a full catharsis and a revival of the poetry of radical intellect, remains present in the background, along with the uncompleted plan for an adaptation of *La vida es sueño*. And these two pieces of unfinished business, as we shall see, are later dealt with at one stroke.

9

HOFMANNSTHAL'S RETURN

Hofmannsthal's development is nothing if not complex. Technical difficulties and philosophical difficulties echo one another, breed one another, and confuse one another; every form, every achievement, every completed text, reveals new problems. I have already simplified the situation considerably by leaving narrative out of consideration, and by postponing until Part III a discussion of the more publicly conceived theatrical works, the festival plays and musical plays. In the present chapter, I will discuss an attempt on Hofmannsthal's own part to simplify his situation and justify to himself his continuing in the poetic–intellectual career that had been made problematic in Chandos and the tragedies.

I

By a cryptic "inner dating,"[1] Hofmannsthal suggests that "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" must be thought of in relation to the Chandos letter; but neither this feature of the text nor the idea of "the heightened moment" justifies Kobel's assertion that "The emigrant, who has lived eighteen years overseas and now returns to Germany, undergoes experiences similar to Lord Chandos'" (p. 157).[2] Kobel quotes the following to substantiate his point:

> Sometimes in the morning, in these German hotel rooms, it happened that the jug and the wash basin, or a corner of the room with the table and coat-rack, appeared so not-real to me, in spite of their indescribable ordinariness, so utterly not real, in a sense ghostly, and also provisional, waiting, occupying so to speak only temporarily the place of the real jug and the real wash basin filled with water. (P2 298–9)

The "similar" motif in the Chandos letter can only be the feeling of unreality in *words*, especially "abstract words" (P2 12); and what saves Chandos from this feeling is precisely a surging awareness that everyday objects are not unreal at all, that "these mute and

sometimes inanimate creatures" somehow present themselves to him with an "immediacy of love," that everything is *something*: "Es erscheint mir alles ... etwas zu sein" (P2 16). This feeling for objects is quite different from the homecomer's. I will argue, in fact, that the true relation between the homecomer's letters and the Chandos letter is not simple similarity but dialectical opposition.

The parallel that must be drawn is between Chandos' illuminations at the *end* of his account and the visions of "Deutschland" described by the homecomer at the *beginning* of his. Chandos, riding in the plowed field, not only dreams of the poisoned rats, but *is* in the cellar with them, and *is* in Alba Longa and Carthage as well; the experience is one of presence, immediacy, "Gegenwart" (P2 15). And this is the sort of experience that had come upon the homecomer earlier with the feeling of "Deutschland": "it was no over here and over there, no duality at all, that I felt; it was each in the other" (P2 282). The homecomer had not merely thought of Germany, but in those moments he "*was there*" (P2 283). Or again, as Chandos puts it, "It was much more and much less than sympathy: an enormous involvement, a flowing over into those creatures, or the feeling that a fluid of life and death, of dream and waking, had for a moment flowed out into them – from where?" (P2 15). Chandos' *present* illuminations have in common with the homecomer's *past* experiences this sense of a subtle fluid medium by which widely separated situations and conditions are united, and by which our awareness of an empirical self ("from where?") is thus dissolved. The homecomer says of his earlier experiences, "I was only like the keyboard on which someone else's hand is playing" (P2 285). There is no opposition, no "Zweiheit"; one becomes mystically united with the object of thinking; the empirical limits of the self simply disappear.

But this quality belongs to *different* stages in Chandos' development and the homecomer's, and reflects an important difference between the two works. What disturbs the homecomer in Germany is the experience that "almost for the first time in my life, a feeling of myself forces itself on me" (P2 279), whereas what disturbs Chandos when he loses his confidence in words is exactly the opposite, that he has lost his feeling of self, that he hardly knows whether he is "the same person" Bacon had written to (P2 7). And the later ecstatic experiences, by which Chandos and the homecomer are to an extent cured of their disorientation, are correspondingly opposed; each is cured by an experience that intensifies the feeling that had disoriented him, Chandos by a still

more complete loss of self, the homecomer by a still stronger awareness of self.

Kobel asserts that the saving experiences in both works are essentially the same, and his argument has difficulty here. After quoting Chandos on the "utter infinite interplay" in him and around him, composed of essences he can "flow into" (P2 16–17), Kobel goes on to say, "Such an interplay [Widerspiel] must also be meant when the homecomer, before Van Gogh's pictures, feels as if he were doubled" (p. 170). This refers to the homecomer's statement, "And now I could ... enjoy abysses and pinnacles, outside and inside, the one and the all, in a ten-thousandth of the time it takes me to write the words, and I was as if doubled, was at the same time master of my life, master of my powers, my understanding" (P2 304). But precisely this passage shows Chandos' and the homecomer's experiences as opposites. Chandos' "Widerspiel," or "this harmony that weaves together myself and the whole world" (P2 17), involves the *dissolution* of self – even of his physical self, for it now seems to him "as if my body were composed of nothing but ciphers" (P2 17) – whereas the homecomer's experience of doubleness *magnifies* his self and makes him his own "master." The opposition can be seen even more clearly in the results of these experiences; Chandos' illuminations distract him and make it difficult for him to carry out the practical business of life, whereas the homecomer, after his visit to the gallery, claims to be able to conduct practical business better than ever.

2

The Chandos letter and "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," considered in relation to one another, are contraries, not parallels. In structure, however, there is a clear similarity; each work has four main phases: (1) the memory of a past state that had been relatively happy; (2) the description of a crisis in which the individual had become disoriented with respect to his own existence; (3) the arrival of an epiphany[3] or "heightened moment" in which the crisis is resolved, at least temporarily; (4) a kind of coda, of which I will discuss the significance later, represented by Chandos' story of Crassus and the homecomer's closing narration of color experiences, especially the scene in the harbor at Buenos Aires.

The two works are different in the way this structural scheme is filled out. In fact, with regard to the idea of the self, "Die Briefe des

Zurückgekehrten" show the development of the Chandos letter in reverse. We have noted that Chandos' epiphanies (phase 3) are similar not to the homecomer's ecstatic Van Gogh experience (phase 3) but to his remembered experiences (phase 1), in being characterized by a dissolution of the self in a fluid medium that transcends space and time. There is a symmetrical correspondence between Chandos' phase 1 and the homecomer's phase 3. What Chandos remembers (phase 1) are the happy days when his self had been unceasingly creative and self-affirmative, the young man in Venice, for example, who had found as much delight in his literary plans as in "those buildings of Palladio and Sansovin rising from the sea" (P2 8). In those days the whole world had seemed merely a mirror of himself: "in everything I felt nature . . . and in all nature I felt myself" (P2 10). His planned collection of apophthegms, containing ideas from throughout the world and throughout history, would have borne the title "Nosce te ipsum" (P2 10). He himself now applies to that earlier period the term "presumption" ("Anmaßung"), as opposed to his present "despondency and powerlessness" (P2 11). Phase 1 for Chandos is the phase of self-expression, self-affirmation, self-magnification.

And correspondingly, the homecomer's Van Gogh experience (phase 3) – the experience of art, like Chandos' experience of Venetian architecture in his phase 1 – includes the feeling of being "master of my life." His relation to the paintings is characterized by a feeling of gigantic self-reflection similar to the feeling Chandos had had (in phase 1) about nature as a whole: "in my seeing I lost the feeling of my self to these pictures, and received it again powerfully, and again lost it!" (P2 302–3). He describes

> how this language [of the paintings] spoke to my soul, hurled at me a gigantic justification of my strangest, most unresolvable inward states, made me suddenly comprehend the feeling that I in my insufferable dullness could hardly endure, and that nevertheless – how clearly I felt it! – I could not tear out of myself – and here an unknown soul of unimaginable strength answered me, answered me with a world! (P2 304)

When he speaks of "inward states," and of the feeling he can no longer tear out of himself, the homecomer means the disorienting "feeling of my self" he had mentioned at the very beginning; and what Van Gogh now provides him with is "die gigantische Rechtfertigung" of just this feeling, a justification of his uncomfortable awareness of self, a gigantic self-justification like that which had characterized the remembered past (phase 1) for Chandos.

The situation may be summarized as follows. PHASE 1, the happy past: for Chandos a period of creative self-affirmation in which nature, art, myth and history seem but one huge mirror to the self; for the homecomer, overseas, a period of constant outgoing activity with no time to think of the self ("I am no daydreamer" [P2 286]), punctuated occasionally by the sudden plunge into a fluid medium that washes away his empirical existence and unites him with "Deutschland." PHASE 2, the crisis: for Chandos the *loss* of his sense of self, his self-confidence, his ability to make judgments or use abstract words; for the homecomer the *awakening* of a sense of self, in that now he is not absorbed in outward activities but thinks about himself and feels alienated from his surroundings. PHASE 3, the epiphany: for Chandos a justification of his loss of self, in that he now loses himself even more completely and flows forth into mystical union with the world; for the homecomer a justification of his new-found sense of self in the mirror of Van Gogh, where he learns to appreciate the self's creativity, learns about the ability of the titanic self to create, "out of its terrifying doubt," a new artistic world of its own in the face of "yawning Nothingness" (P2 304) – we think of those buildings in Venice, rising, for Chandos, out of the sea, striving upward out of the formless element – and learns therefore to grasp the possibility that his own most powerful experiences are really derived from a "secret formative power in myself, somewhere where I am kept from going by a constant inward sleep" (P2 306). The direction of development in "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" is thus exactly the reverse of that in the Chandos letter.

3

Only phase 4 of the scheme remains, which contains the integration of the epiphany into the individual's normal mode of experience, a synthesis leading to personal growth. The figure of Crassus in the Chandos letter no longer belongs to phase 3; he does not represent or awaken a mystical vision by which Chandos' self is swept away. On the contrary, he is for Chandos "a mirror image of myself" (P2 18), a means of self-knowledge, but not self-knowledge as "presumption"; it is a self-knowledge now suffused with the helpless fluid nature of the preceding epiphany, as if Chandos himself were "fermenting, bubbling, boiling, sparkling." And the whole experience, he says, "is a kind of feverish thinking, but thinking in a material that is more immediate, more fluid, more glowing than

words. There are also vortices, but vortices that seem to end not in the abyss, like those of language, but in myself and in the deepest bosom of peace" (P2 19). Chandos has regained his sense of self, but his self has expanded beyond the personal or artistically productive and become an object of quasi-religious piety ("in mich selber" = "in den tiefsten Schoß des Friedens") which requires of him a language he does not yet know, the language of "mute things," in which he will perhaps one day have to give an account of himself "before an unknown judge" (P2 20).

The situation in the fifth of "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" corresponds structurally, but has the categories reversed. Here the homecomer discusses the experience of colors as such, and as with Chandos and Crassus, the experience no longer belongs to phase 3. The examples are chosen from memories of overseas, and are examples of the effect of colors in nature, not color as the artistic vehicle by which a titanic self "responds to the paralysis of terrifying doubts" (P2 304). But on the other hand, these experiences, at least as he now thinks of them, do not belong to his phase 1 (active, engaged self-forgetfulness) either, for they now include an awareness of his own self as their creative center: "Did I not mention that the colors of things, on certain curious occasions, have a power over me? But is it not rather I who gain power over them?" (P2 307). The reversal of the Chandos letter is quite exact, for the homecomer also now has a "mirror image" in Rama Krishna; whereas Chandos, who is now a kind of religious mystic, finds himself mirrored in a Roman senator, a man of "world-governing" affairs (P2 19), the homecomer, who is a man of affairs, is mirrored in a religious mystic. Even the motif of Crassus' uncomprehending opponent Domitius is repeated in the figure of the English cleric (P2 307) from whom the homecomer receives an uncomprehending account of Rama Krishna.

And what the homecomer achieves in his last letter is what Chandos in the end achieves, a reinterpretation and reintegration of his earlier existence. It is significant that the two main color experiences mentioned, Rama Krishna's and the homecomer's own, involve air and water, for this motif recalls the self-transcending experiences of phase 1, where we hear, "air and water are great lords and make whatever they please of humans" (P2 283). Now, however, the homecomer recognizes that the essence of the experience in the harbor at Buenos Aires had been not a mere sweeping away of the self, but rather an assertion of the self, a "sacred enjoyment of myself and also of the world" (P2 308). Even in the

midst of a ceaselessly active existence such as the homecomer's had been earlier, a person cannot live without some sense of the transcendent and unified meaning of life; this philosophical sense had been provided for the homecomer by the maxim "The whole man must move at once" (P2 281) and by his moments of mystical presence in Germany. Now, however, he reinterprets these philosophical movements and recognizes that they do not belong exclusively to some extra-personal agency like "Deutschland," that they have to do with an aloneness of the self with itself that is revealed in the "inmost core" of experience, even the experience of our outward helplessness (P2 310). Just as Chandos' earlier artistic existence of self-expression, in a world having the character of one huge self-reflection, is now tempered and resolved by a feeling of the self's irreparable *insufficiency*, so the homecomer's thoroughly practical existence, in a world of external objects by which he is limited and constrained, now receives a new center and equilibrium from the experience of an invulnerable *sufficiency* of the self, from a vision of "the sacred grottoes" of nature, "in which you can be one with yourself, despite your alienation out there [draußen]" (P2 310). Whereas Chandos has learned to throw himself open to all externals and to God (χανδόν, "greedily, wide open"), the homecomer has learned to live with his own self, as it were "At the still point of the turning world."

4

It is clear that the relation between the "Brief" and the "Briefe" has to do with the distinction between intellectual and social existence, which here appears as the distinction between the artistic life and the practical life or between form and substance. Chandos, who starts out as an artist, enters his crisis when the form of things, his ability to make general judgments and use abstract words, begins to disintegrate; and his epiphany occurs when the sheer substance of things offers itself to him regardless of form, when he sees that "everything is something." The homecomer, on the other hand, enters his crisis when the heretofore unquestioned substantiality of things seems to dissolve; and his epiphany occurs when he receives from Van Gogh the form of things as a substitute. What he receives in the painted objects is not a simple joy of being, "not the voluptuousness and harmony of their lovely mute life" (compare Chandos' "mute things"), but "nur die Wucht ihres Daseins, das wütende, von Unglaublichkeit umstarrte Wunder

ihres Daseins" (P2 303). And that this "weight" or "miracle" of existence has to do with *form* is made clear in the next sentence:

> Wie kann ich es Dir nahebringen, daß hier jedes Wesen – *ein Wesen* jeder Baum, jeder Streif gelben oder grünlichen Feldes, jeder Zaun, jeder in den Steinhügel gerissene Hohlweg, ein Wesen der zinnerne Krug, die irdene Schüssel, der Tisch, der plumpe Sessel – sich mir wie neugeboren aus dem furchtbaren Chaos des Nichtlebens, aus dem Abgrund der Wesenlosigkeit entgegenhob. (P2 303–4)

Each thing in the paintings is its own "one essence," "*ein Wesen*," newborn out of the womb of "chaos" with its own unique quiddity, its inviolable form that *separates* it from the rest of the world rather than submerging it in a universal fluid "Harmonie." We think of the artisan in *Das Kleine Welttheater*, whose aim, like Van Gogh's, is to isolate "Ein-Wesen" (W3 140; G 306) in the general flux of existence.

Kobel insists that "Wesen" (essence) has become synonymous with "Dasein" (existence) in this passage (p. 164). But even if Hofmannsthal is not a trained philosopher, I do not think he fails to distinguish between "Wesen" and "Dasein." He says "Wesen" and (by distinction from the fluid "harmony" of existence) he means "Wesen" in the normal sense of *quidditas*. The homecomer's sense that these painted "Wesen" are born directly out of "Chaos" recalls clearly Hofmannsthal's note: "Form the Sustainer; world = chaos captured and rescued in forms" (A 127). Salvation from chaos is in the *form* by which "ein Wesen" is distinguished from all other things. This idea ought to be clear already from the use, in "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," of paintings as the stimulus of the epiphany. What the homecomer learns from Van Gogh is to appreciate the "bildende Kraft" (P2 306), the *formative* power in himself.[4]

The "Brief" deals with a crisis in the artistic life that leads to an appreciation of the sheer substantialness of external things, their irreducible *otherness*, by which Chandos is drawn forth out of his own self; "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" deal with a crisis in practical life that leads to an appreciation of form and of the formative power in the self. We think of Schiller's doctrine of "Stofftrieb" and "Formtrieb" (matter- and form-drives),[5] especially in view of Hofmannsthal's own centennial essay on Schiller, where he says, "The advocate [Schiller] espoused the cause of freedom before royal thrones, and a king's before freedom's throne. That sounds like something from the life of a

dangerous sophist; but to him it was permissible, for he was a true man" (P2 152–3). This seems to be the model Hofmannsthal has in mind in "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," the approach to an old intellectual problem from a direction diametrically opposite to the one he had adopted earlier.

And the procedure is no more sophistry in Hofmannsthal's case than in Schiller's. The Chandos letter is a calling into question of art, by showing that the one-sided artistic life necessarily tends in time toward a crisis of confrontation with what is excluded from it, and that the result is at best an equilibrium which, while perhaps personally fulfilling, is no longer productive. *Is art still possible*, therefore, especially in an age when, as Balzac prophesies in "Über Charaktere im Roman und im Drama," the Chandos crisis has taken hold of a whole generation?

> [For Balzac's characters] there are no experiences, because there are no experiences anywhere . . . because a curious chemistry, which occurs with every drawing of breath, will decompose life more and more, so that even disappointment, the loss of illusions, this unavoidable experience, will fall into the deep well of the soul not in one piece, but ground into dust, in atoms, with every drawing of breath: so completely, that around 1890 or 1900 people will no longer understand what we meant by the word "experience" [Erlebnis]. (P2 44–5)

Can the artist even begin to exist and produce in a world of experience that constantly breaks down into its configurationless atoms, its mere substance?

Hofmannsthal, in the years intervening between Chandos and the homecomer, attempts to deal with this problem not only by experiencing it as deeply as possible in the form of tragedy, but also by working toward a synthesis of intellectual with social existence in the forms of essay and dialogue. And this second path, by way of an increasing concern with art from the point of view of the *recipient* rather than the creator – for example, in the planned dialogue "Der Leser" (A 143–4), the three literary "Unterhaltungen," "Der Dichter und diese Zeit"[6] – leads eventually to a solution in the figure of the homecomer. Leaving aside the question of whether it is possible to produce art, the "Briefe" show that even for a person entirely immersed in practical life, art is *necessary*. Just as the artistic life leads to a crisis that transforms it, so even the most practical life imaginable leads in time to a crisis that requires a titanic artistic soul, a Van Gogh, to provide an "answer" for it. Art, therefore, precisely in the sense of intellectual art, a titanic insistence upon order in the face of threatening chaos, fulfils a *necessary*

social function, even for the non-intellectual, even for a person like the homecomer; and with this recognition, which is already suggested in "Der Dichter und diese Zeit," the synthesis of intellectual and social existence is achieved, at least in the form of an interdependence of the two. "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" are thus themselves an "answer" to the question raised by the Chandos letter, and this relationship of question and answer is the center of the whole complex of relations between the works.[7]

5

The idea of the indispensable social function of intellectual art simplifies several problems, and enables the artist of the Chandos crisis to return to productivity. What paralyzes the artist is his relentless "Nosce te ipsum," the cumulative effect of that concentration on absolute duty or truth which is presented in the tragedies of Electra and Oedipus. If it is now possible for the artist to regard his uncompromising quest for order as a social or *altruistic* endeavor, then the crisis may be averted or at least postponed. In "Ad me ipsum" Hofmannsthal distinguishes four different paths into "Existenz," four different ways of resisting the constant self-conscious temptation of pre-existence: the way of "Introversion" (A 215) which is Chandos' way; and "the nonmystical way" which is subdivided into three, "a) by the deed b) by the work c) by the child" (A 217). The way by deed or action (Tat) involves a forcible turning of one's back on self-consciousness, a "transition from the conscious to the unconscious"; and the way "by the child," as in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, involves a submission to forces that are entirely beyond conscious comprehension. But it is the way "by the work" that first becomes possible with "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" and "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten"; for the work, as opposed to the deed, is an enduring creation of conscious intellect that has as its purpose the awakening of consciousness in others.[8] The author, therefore, in order for his work to operate as his way into existence, his resistance to *self*-conscious temptation, must learn to think of the work in terms of a consciousness *different in character from his own*; he must learn to recognize his work's necessity and validity from a non-intellectual point of view, which is what Hofmannsthal attempts in "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten."

What the poet must learn, in other words, is what Hofmannsthal later claims to have learned in connection with *Jedermann*, to be "a spectator among spectators" (P3 119). We have observed a ten-

dency in Hofmannsthal to apply the meaning of his works directly to himself as an artist; but this concentration upon the self leads inevitably to the crisis of intellectual existence. The poet must learn to carry out the act of artistic production not as an act of self-analysis or self-elaboration, but as an affirmation of some form of citizenship, with no special relation to his individuality. The poet must learn to be a poet without taking this aspect of his existence too seriously, too Wertherianly. He must regard his being a poet mainly as a relation to other people, acknowledging their otherness. Hofmannsthal claims to have achieved this when he writes to Stephan Gruss, in 1907, that he is confident of having retained his basic humanity: "just as I must accept myself as a poet, so I accept everyone who does or is anything, even the philistine, with real sympathy and a kind of joy" (B2 254–5). And a relaxed openness to externals is also stressed when later, in connection with the genesis of *Jedermann*, we hear of "a special kind of inward youthfulness" that arrives in middle age and has the ability "to recognize what is genuine and essential in other existences, and to adopt toward them an attitude not of tolerance but of sincere gladness and enjoyment" (P3 117). All of this sounds, and is clearly meant to sound, like the thinking of a poet who has managed to find his way past the stage of intellectual crisis into a sound and stable relation with society and the world at large.

But we may not take Hofmannsthal's own utterances on this matter as an objective judgment. In the first place, the genre of tragedy still represents a piece of unfinished business. In the second place, 1907, the year in which an apparent synthesis of intellectual and social existence is achieved, is also the year in which Hofmannsthal abandons for the time being his pledge of cultural allegiance in *Jedermann*, until 1910 when he picks it up again under different conditions. And in the third place, there is a logical difficulty in Hofmannsthal's thought; for the resolve to overcome poetry as personal intellectual self-elaboration, in favor of poetry as participation in society, is itself a piece of intellectual self-elaboration, a lesson he had learned from his own works, especially from the Chandos letter and the essays that follow it. The resolution of 1907 is at least in part illusory, and turns out to be precarious in the event.

6

The problematic side of Hofmannsthal's "return" to himself in 1907 has to do especially with the idea of opening the self to the social and looking at art from the point of view of the recipient.

While it is possible to infer abstractly, as Hofmannsthal does, what such a resolve must mean from the point of view of the creator, it is not a simple matter to apply the inference in practice.

The direction in which Hofmannsthal moves, the way in which he first attempts to realize productively the theoretical achievement of "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" and "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," is suggested when his fictional Balzac tells Hammer-Purgstall:

> that characters in drama are nothing but contrapuntal necessities. The dramatic character is a constriction of the real one. What fascinates me about the real character is precisely his breadth [Breite]. His breadth, which is the basis of his fate. (P2 37)

Clearly a "constriction" of the real human character is necessary for an artist in the Chandos crisis, who has lost his sense of self-mirroring contact with the whole breadth of nature; and clearly the intellectual problem-tragedies of Electra and Oedipus, where the characters are stripped of everything but their function, carry out such constriction. "The nature of the stage image is narrowness" (P2 68), says Hofmannsthal in "Szenische Vorschriften zu 'Elektra,'" and in "Die Bühne als Traumbild" he repeatedly stresses "economy" and "simplicity" (P2 63, 65). The dramatic conceptions of this period that show real breadth, *Pompilia* and *Das gerettete Venedig*, are failures.

But in 1907, now that Hofmannsthal has reason to believe he has mastered the Chandos crisis, we find him aiming at the "Breite" his Balzac speaks of, with a plan for the expansive genre *par excellence*, Balzac's genre, in the novel *Andreas*, and with his decisive turn toward comedy, in plans for *Silvia* and perhaps *Florindo*. While tragedy for Hofmannsthal involves a tight focus on intellectual tensions, the transformation of stage and theater into a kind of self-entrapped dreaming brain, comedy appears to permit an expansiveness in the direction of "the *achieved social*" (A 226). In an obvious reversal of Schiller's "*Eng* ist die Welt, und das Gehirn ist *weit*" (*Wallensteins Tod*, 787), Vittoria had said, "Much, much easier are some things here where they happen than here where we dream them" (D1 264); and this relative unconstraint of the real world, as opposed to the mind, is what Hofmannsthal is aiming at when, for example, he now also decides to flesh out *Jedermann* into *Dominik Heintls letzter Tag*, a play meant to involve "the use of the *Jedermann* scenario, something of *Volpone*, interwoven with the motif 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'" (A 158).[9] *Jedermann*, for the time being, has served its purpose as a diversion from what

Hofmannsthal, mindful of Goethe, had considered his self-destructive tragic tendency; but the medieval drama is now itself too austerely allegorical to satisfy a growing Goethean desire for the variety and broad equilibrium of life.

The movement toward breadth is a return for Hofmannsthal in more ways than one. It is an attempt to revive the spirit of Chandos' early poetic phase, the ability to accept and integrate an extreme diversity of experience. And as emerges from Balzac's association of "breadth" with "reality," it is also an attempt on Hofmannsthal's part to resume his development where he had left off at *Theater in Versen*, in the mimetic–ethical effort to limit the presence of truth for the sake of a genuine participation in life. But the decade of crisis cannot be obliterated from memory, and a number of developmental loose ends continue to occupy Hofmannsthal: the genre of tragedy, especially the plan for *Das Leben ein Traum*, which is perhaps even more deeply related to the Chandos letter than *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays;[10] the idea of the poet's cultural citizenship, which plays a part in helping Hofmannsthal out of his intellectual difficulties but then, after the theoretical breakthrough of 1906–7, is abandoned for the time being, along with its vehicle *Jedermann*; and the crucial idea of an overcoming or dissolution of the concept of the individual. This last idea is not abandoned in 1907, but merely changes its form. Whereas in the tragedies and in *Jedermann*, individuality had been stripped away to reveal pure function, now, with the aid of Morton Prince's psychological researches,[11] Hofmannsthal begins to develop the idea of multiple or split personalities, not a reduction but an explosion of the individual.

Nevertheless, we can still speak of "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" as Hofmannsthal's return to himself. It is true that in the years immediately following, the only major works completed are those related either directly or indirectly to the collaboration with Strauss (in which group I include both *Cristinas Heimreise* and *Jedermann*); but Hofmannsthal has also begun to work in a direction he regards as promising and truly his own, Strauss or no Strauss. The idea of multiple personalities is especially significant, in that it makes possible for him a sense of tight cohesion in his development, by establishing connections with the idea of "my ego of *yesterday*," with the multiple "states" of *Das Kleine Welttheater*, and with the adventurer-motif, the man of masks, in *Abenteurer*, which is then developed in Florindo and finally in Hans Karl.[12]

In fact the idea of multiple personalities, differently applied, may

be the whole secret of "Hofmannsthal's return." In a note from 1906 that obviously has to do with "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten," we read:

> "The whole man must move at once" – well and good. But for significant productive people, is there not a less obvious but equally true possibility: to march separately and reunite at the field of battle? (A 151)

The anguish of the Chandos crisis is caused precisely by an insistence on the whole man's moving at once, which entails that the logical and technical difficulties inherent in the intellectual endeavor of the poet as poet must in time have a catastrophic effect on the whole personality. If the whole intellectual moves at once, his movement is self-destructive, like Chandos' or Electra's or Oedipus' or Werther's. Therefore Hofmannsthal asks whether it is necessary for the whole intellectual to move at once, whether it is not possible for a person to work intellectually, yet at the same time live a life fully integrated in society ("to march separately," which, if the Chandos crisis is not mere hypochondria, *would* require separate personalities), in the hope that on crucial occasions the two halves of his nature might coalesce and bring forth an intellectually magical work of art, founded on a metaphysical grasp of our paradoxical divinity, but a work that also belongs to and regenerates real human society – or as this must mean for Hofmannsthal, a work of drama that combines the actual virtues of *Der Tor und der Tod* with the envisaged virtues of *Theater in Versen*, a work that actually creates a community of participants in the theater, but is directed at a real, not an ideal community. Hofmannsthal asks this question in 1906; and that an affirmative answer is necessary for the survival not only of the artist but of society itself, becomes clear in "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten." The question of whether an affirmative answer is possible, however, the question of exactly what kind of work is required, is not fully developed until *Der Schwierige*, and perhaps not answered even there.

10

MISSED MEETINGS IN *DER SCHWIERIGE*

For the time being I will leave aside the musical plays and *Jedermann* in favor of *Der Schwierige*. The present chapter is concerned with the structure of the play in an entirely concrete sense, with a kind of geometrical dance-figure created by meetings among the characters and with the arrangement of characters into a hierarchy of types. Such patterns are experimented with in *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, where we have seen it is difficult to reconcile them with a sense of the theater as a model of actual society. But in *Der Schwierige*, though the element of ethical prescription is still evident, I will argue that the geometrical and hierarchical structures are made into the vehicle of a genuine social blossoming in the audience.

I

Mindful of Hofmannsthal's suggestion that *Der Schwierige* immediately succeeds the Chandos letter in a logical development beginning with *Der Tor und der Tod* and *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*, I have suggested affinities between that comedy and Chandos, and I have tried to explain the delay between the two works by arguing that Hofmannsthal, even after pulling himself together in 1907, is really neither as confident nor as clear-sighted about his future as he pretends. The tension between the lyrical and mimetic modes, for example, which had grown increasingly troublesome in his development through *Theater in Versen*, is by no means disposed of: the distinction between poetic forms that grow directly from their deeper meaning and forms that result from an imitative act which, in its concession to reality, is itself an ethically significant gesture.

Around 1907, Hofmannsthal appears to decide firmly in favor of the mimetic,[1] but the novel *Andreas* then turns out not to be a serious attempt at realism after all, and a similar retreat from the mimetic can be observed in the collaboration with Strauss. With

regard to *Cristinas Heimreise*, which in 1908 is still being considered as a possible Strauss opera, Hofmannsthal is willing to undertake "a certain transposition of the whole into the simplified and lyrical," but only *after* completing the text as a more or less realistic comedy, because, he says, "I could never work from the outset toward this lyrical formulation of the text, which leaves most of the characterization to the composer" (H/RS, p. 40). In the case of *Der Rosenkavalier*, however, less than a year later, he reverses his position almost exactly; even though he recognizes, with reference to Ochs's "aria" (LI 284–6), that "The aria quality broke through my mimic precision," he still concedes, "But there have to be arias ... The arias compel him [Strauss] to characterize the main figures by means of voice (not merely orchestra)" (H/HK, p. 234). It is true that the idea of the "lyrical" in these letters is not exactly the same idea that is applied by Hofmannsthal around 1900 to his own early works. But both ideas are *opposed* to essentially the same mimetic idea of detailed characterization through dialogue; and in 1911 Hofmannsthal himself tries to see in the lyricism of his operatic work, in the "little songs" in *Ariadne*, a resumption of his early activity as a poet (H/EvB, p. 128). At any rate, Ariadne may be "*real*, as real as the Marschallin" (H/RS, p. 118); but her realness (in both versions) is situated at several ironic removes from the audience, and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which stylistic parody is prominent anyway, thus tends strongly away from the mimetic.

Nor does Hofmannsthal's apparent resolve in favor of Balzac's "Breite" last very long. In *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne*, with *Jedermann* picked up along the way, tight artificial structures are favored; and in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, from the earliest conception on, the characters are almost literally "contrapuntal necessities."[2] Or we recall Alewyn's point concerning the "magic square" or "the quadruple figure in *Lucidor*, in *Ariadne*, in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*," which is part of an argument to the effect that in Hofmannsthal's later works, "The configurations, not psychological analysis, are important."[3] My point now is that this tendency away from the ideal of a broad vision of reality, toward tight "contrapuntal" configurations, also affects *Der Schwierige*, not so obviously as in the musical plays, but perhaps therefore more deeply.

In particular, one of the entirely basic techniques of dramatic comedy is the arrangement of scenes so as to bring about encounters between characters who are interestingly out of tune with one another, either by nature or by misunderstanding. This technique

supports the comic sense of a world so broadly inclusive and inherently stable that it can survive, as a whole, even the most extreme incongruities; and I think we expect of a well constructed comedy that at least all the obvious possibilities for embarrassing encounters will be realized.[4] Therefore in *Cristina* and *Silvia*, and still in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hofmannsthal favors the "Wirtshaus" locale, the public place where an interestingly incongruous group of personages can be maneuvered onto the stage without strain.

But in *Der Schwierige* there are a number of clearly anticipated encounters, with considerable comic potential, that do not occur. Although Professor Brücke, "the famous man," tries repeatedly to meet Hans Karl, and although meetings between him and, say, Stani or Helene would be at least interesting, the professor does not actually speak with any of the play's main characters except Neuhoff, with whom he has most in common anyway. And Stani, though he has designs of a sort on both Helene and Antoinette, never meets either of these ladies on stage. Perhaps all these meetings would distract from the play's main development. But then why are they present in the action as possibilities? Why is the play not at least constructed so as to keep these people out of range of one another?[5]

2

In order to deal with the absence of a meeting between Stani and either his intended mistress or his intended wife, we must begin with the central "configuration" of characters, the play's structural backbone, as represented by the progression: Hans Karl–Stani–Neuhoff–Professor Brücke. Hans Karl, though affectionate, always preserves a definite ironic superiority in conversation with Stani, which appears most clearly in his reaction to Stani's remark that anyone but he (Hans Karl), alone with Antoinette at "Grünleiten," would have become her lover (L2 180). In I, xii, however, Neuhoff's entrance provides Stani with an interlocutor to whom *he* is ironically superior; and Neuhoff is then presented as ironically superior to Professor Brücke when the latter hankers to be introduced to the Spanish ambassador's wife (L2 224).

But ironic superiority from level to level is only a symptom of the relation among these characters. The principle of the relation is given in Hans Karl's last speech to Hechingen:

> Aber alles, was man ausspricht, ist indezent. Das simple Faktum, daß man etwas ausspricht, ist indezent. Und wenn man es genau nimmt, mein guter

Ado, aber die Menschen nehmen eben nichts auf der Welt genau, liegt doch geradezu etwas Unverschämtes darin, daß man sich heranwagt, gewisse Dinge überhaupt zu erleben! Um gewisse Dinge zu erleben und sich dabei nicht indezent zu finden, dazu gehört ja eine so rasende Verliebtheit in sich selbst und ein Grad von Verblendung, den man vielleicht als erwachsener Mensch im innersten Winkel in sich tragen, aber niemals sich eingestehen kann! (L2 312)

But everything that we speak out is indecent. The simple fact that we say something is indecent. Strictly speaking, my dear Ado – but people don't think strictly about anything in the world – there is something positively shameless in our presuming even to experience certain things. To experience certain things and not feel indecent requires such a furious infatuation with oneself and a degree of self-delusion that a grown person can perhaps sustain in the inmost corner of himself but can never admit to!

What Hans Karl is doing in this wonderfully illogical speech is exactly what he is talking about; he is admitting, by refusing to admit to himself, the true extent of the enormous self-infatuation that both Helene and Antoinette, each in her own way, recognize in him,[6] and that he himself has expressed by his fascination with his mirror image in the clown Furlani. Self-love, however, in the sense that it characterizes Hans Karl, cannot be dismissed as a vice, for its effects in society are not damaging or embarrassing. Its intensity is such that it has no choice but to *deny* itself as far as possible; paradoxically, therefore, it takes the outward form of a kind of modesty, a delicate and acquiescing relation to others. The psychology in operation here is not especially subtle; what is interesting is the evaluation of self-love it implies, which recalls young Hofmannsthal's suggestion apropos Narcissus, that the quest for the self, when prosecuted strongly enough, becomes the path to a "life" of external engagement. Those characters in *Der Schwierige* who seem most enamored of themselves, Neuhoff and Professor Brücke, reveal by their self-emphasis an inner insecurity; they would like to love themselves as Hans Karl does, but in truth they do not. Hans Karl, in his conversations with Helene and Antoinette, treats each woman according to *her* character; he keeps his distance from Antoinette, but with Helene acknowledges her claim to know his thoughts. Neuhoff, on the other hand, who progresses in the opposite direction, from Helene to Antoinette, seeks nothing but support for *his* character. He himself, with repressed envy, describes Hans Karl as "balancing from head to toe in the self-assurance of limitless triviality" (L2 230); but this "triviality" is precisely Hans Karl's ability to deal with other people

on their own terms, in a world where misunderstanding is unavoidable and where the insistence on intellectual truth in conversation is recognizable as the desperate self-assertion of a personality lacking in the "self-assurance" of true self-esteem.

This type of argument, the attempt to explain Hans Karl's uniqueness, has long been currency in criticism of the play. This is as it must be. The very title presents Hans Karl as a puzzle, and the schematic quality of his relation to Neuhoff, that he and Neuhoff encounter the two ladies in opposite order and with significantly opposed intentions and results, begs for elucidation. But in following this line of thought, we must ask *all* the questions that are suggested, and one such question concerns Stani. Clearly Stani shares with Neuhoff and the professor a need for self-confirmation; he talks of nothing but himself. Shall we, then, still insist on ranking him above Neuhoff, next to Hans Karl, on the scale of true self-love? Shall we insist that his self-confidence is so blindly outrageous as to give him in the end a certain charm that the others lack? His reaction to Hans Karl's doubts about his decision to marry Helene, for example, his assumption that Hans Karl is worried about his "giving himself away too cheap" (L2 207), is an unsurpassable piece of egoism. Shall we maintain that despite a certain youthful insecurity, he still in truth loves himself more genuinely than either Neuhoff or Professor Brücke, that the naiveté of his egoism, and the instinct that moves him to take his uncle as a model, determine his position on the scale? Attitudes toward Hans Karl can perhaps be used to trace the whole progression from true self-love to helpless overintellectual insecurity: Hans Karl himself loves Hans Karl with all his heart, Stani admires Hans Karl but without understanding him, Neuhoff does his best to dismiss Hans Karl, and the professor wants to be admired *by* Hans Karl, to receive from him "the acute and incorruptible acknowledgment of the larger world" (L2 231–2).

But if Stani thus fits neatly into the scale of character-types between Hans Karl and Neuhoff, and if each of the latter reveals himself in conversations with both Helene and Antoinette, why does Stani not receive a similar opportunity? That he should encounter Antoinette and Helene is obviously on the cards, given his intentions toward them. And this expectation, once we begin to understand the progression of character-types at the play's center, is strengthened. The possibilities are perhaps now less comic; but they are also more interesting, as a means of understanding the scale of character. Stani is more likeable than Neuhoff, and so

would be more of a test for the women, as they in their turn would be for him. Crescence at the end goes on about Stani's "tenue" (L2 313) in a difficult situation; but in fact his situation is not half so difficult or humiliating as it might have been in a direct encounter with Helene (the opportunity for which he has deliberately, perhaps with instinctive wisdom, let pass [L2 277]) or even with Antoinette, who in her discomposure needs someone "to flirt with" (L2 233) but rejects the idea that Stani could be useful now even for this.

And yet precisely the possibility that a conversation with either Helene or Antoinette would test him beyond his capabilities, I contend, is the reason neither conversation occurs. In the world of this play, Stani's passionate but not yet mature self-love is a valuable quality and must be *protected*. It is not merely funny when he says to Hans Karl:

> That's what I admire so much in you. You speak little, are so distracted, and have such a strong effect ... A gentleman like you speaks with his whole person! Oh I'm studying you. In a few years I'll have it. Now there is still too much passion in me. (L2 179–80)

There is no reason to assume that in a few years Stani will *not* "have" the trick of being like Hans Karl.[7] All he needs, after all, is to progress still further in the self-infatuation of which he already shows a considerable amount; his basic similarity to Hans Karl is even indicated by Hechingen's instinctive attraction to him, which he of course fails to value. Stani's is a promising disposition, out of which something like Hans Karl's personality might grow; but experiences too humiliating for him to cope with would only hinder his development.

The absence of a conversation between Stani and either Helene or Antoinette, therefore, provided we notice it, makes us aware of the *fragility* of the Viennese social world that the play affirms, a world that centers about personalities like Hans Karl, with his "extraordinary credit in the best society" (L2 231). In response to Neuhoff's praise of Helene for being "so sensitive to human quality," Hans Karl remarks, "That's a bit true of all of us here" (L2 194); and such "sensitivity" again belongs to the true self-esteem that Neuhoff lacks, but of which Hans Karl, who finds some "human quality" in practically everyone, is the prime example. The example of Stani, however, reminds us that Hans Karl is not Hans Karl by nature or necessity, that characters of his type can develop only in a specially controlled environment, an environment with a

kind of built-in discretion, in which certain things, like Stani's humiliation before either Helene or Antoinette, are simply not permitted to happen.[8]

Who, after all, or what, *is* Hans Karl? How, and to what extent, is his self-love justified? Does he exhibit any specific qualities that make him, in himself, a great or especially notable personage? Is the actor who plays him (we think of Vittoria and her singing) given the opportunity to show such qualities? The play presents him as an exceptional individual only by way of others' response to him; his exceptional qualities belong as much to his social milieu (they *become* qualities by being recognized there) as to himself. Would he be a great man in the society that produces and values a Neuhoff? Could he love himself as he does in a society where "triviality" is sneered at ? Would he not have been trained there to despise precisely what he now admires in himself and in Furlani? Even without Stani, it is clear that the play is concerned more with a special quality of the society it depicts than with special individual qualities. Again, therefore, it seems to me that we recognize, in Stani's managing to encounter neither Antoinette nor Helene, a quality of the society, an essential quality, without which the society would not be what it is, thus a quality by which that society's fragility is revealed. People like Hans Karl must be nurtured and groomed by the society that in turn needs them in order to exist. Once we grasp this point, Stani's situation becomes clear, for he represents the next generation that must be groomed for being like Hans Karl. Therefore his self-love must be protected and encouraged, his humiliation avoided, his "tenue" admired.

But who is responsible for protecting Stani? He himself, for all his manly decisiveness, is content to spend the early evening at his club, waiting for a telephone message from his mother; even after receiving the message and arriving at Altenwyls, he is extremely careful to avoid a compromising situation. He has already evidently learned a good deal about protecting his reputation in society; but his efforts would be useless, in this case, without the indulgence and assistance of Hans Karl and Crescence, not to mention the operation, in Act III, of something we are tempted to call "chance." From the beginning of Scene ii to the end of Scene viii, either Stani or Helene or Antoinette is always on stage, but no two of them are on at the same time; when Helene appears, twice, Stani is both times conveniently on his way out, and when Stani appears, in Scenes vi and x, first Antoinette and then Helene have just left. As I say, we can speak of "chance" if we please, but we then abdicate

our interpretive responsibility; chance can exist inside the fictional world as a happening, but it cannot operate as a category in interpretation. And once we ask what is meant by the pattern of entrances and exits in Act III, with respect to Stani, it is hard to see how we can avoid the idea of something like a natural dynamics of the social group, as it were an unconsciously cooperative procedure that enables Stani's humiliating encounters to be avoided without strain or embarrassment. The society, acting mysteriously *as* a society, is here apparently protecting its interests.

The importance of this point is that it operates to involve *us* as well, the audience, in the preservation of the decidedly fragile system of manners represented on the stage. Again, the title indicates that in order to understand the play, we must attempt to understand Hans Karl; and a point of view comparable to Neuhoff's or the professor's, or that of the new servant Vinzenz, is clearly inadequate. Hans Karl's qualities *are* estimable qualities only in a particular social element, and we, therefore, at least for the duration of the performance, must make that element our own – unless we simply refuse to understand Hans Karl. Our point of view is in fact most closely approximated by Stani's; we too are called upon to "study" Hans Karl. The unconsciously cooperative effort, within the fictional world, to protect Stani, thus lends itself naturally to being interpreted as the reflection of a tacit cooperative effort in the theater, involving actors and audience. The possibility of Stani's humiliating encounters is raised by the sense of comic conventions that we bring with us to the theater; and we, accordingly, in understanding the play and understanding Hans Karl, are asked to acknowledge our participation in the suspension of those conventions – for the sake of a social tissue that in its fragility obviously *requires* our affirmative participation. The norms and interests and manners of the society on stage are thus meant to pervade the auditorium; the theater, as I have suggested, is meant to become a model of society.

The precise range of this argument must not be lost sight of. I do not mean to assert that in the society depicted in *Der Schwierige* there *is* a mysterious force that manipulates the chance encounters of individuals so as not to endanger Stani's self-esteem. My point is: first, that we are struck by the rather improbably fortunate arrangement of entrances and exits in Act III; second, that the idea of people's seeking advantage from their own and others' movements through various doors and rooms (Antoinette and her spies, Helene's *Operieren* [L2 233], Hans Karl's avoidance of Helene and

Crescence during the half hour it takes him to arrange his departure [L2 279–80]) is insisted upon strongly; third, therefore, that the *idea* of a kind of unconscious management of Stani's situation in Act III is suggested, as an extension of the conscious management exercised by Hans Karl and Crescence; and fourth, that this idea, however, calls our attention to our situation as an audience, which does have the quality of an unacknowledged conspiracy, since by the very act of sitting in the theater we make the gesture of agreeing upon a number of improbable fictional and conventional postulates. But once *we* are implicated, once we recognize that *we* are being asked to interpret our participation in the fragile conventions of the theater as a cooperation in upholding the equally fragile social fabric shown us, the question of a judgment about how this fabric preserves itself *within* the fiction (as if the fiction were reality) becomes irrelevant.[9] The realistic cohesion of the fiction is burst anyway by our attentiveness to the significance of what we are doing in the theater. As in *Der Tor und der Tod*, and in the theatrical discrediting of the theater in the tragedies of naked truth, we ourselves, as we sit there, are the main object of our aesthetic reflection.

This argument does not demonstrate in *Der Schwierige* a solution to the technical and philosophical problems discussed earlier. But I think we can at least see where Hofmannsthal is headed; and we can understand the connection with his early work a bit better if we recall the idea of human divinity, the paradox of the soul. The paradox of Hans Karl's nature, that perfected self-love becomes an exemplary social attitude, is a new version of the doctrine, derivable from the early poems and plays, that the true divinity in human nature is expressed adequately only by an acceptance of finitude and mortality, by an absurd plunge into existence, by a denial of the truth. The philosophical dimension of Hans Karl's nature is suggested, curiously enough, by Neuhoff in his practically insane idea of "will" (L2 253) – a concept that is then borrowed by Helene (L2 297). Neuhoff's violent oscillation between assertion and submission – "mein Recht über Sie" (L2 253); "bei Ihnen wäre meine Rettung" (L2 254); "Über was ich hinweggehe, das aigriert mich nicht" (L2 256); "Sie treten mich ja in den Staub" (L2 257) – is an insistence and a travesty on the paradox of an absolute will that must deny itself absolutely, a divine ego that desires its own defeat by "Opposing Powers." In *Der Schwierige*, however, this paradox is not offered as a metaphysical truth (Neuhoff merely makes it ridiculous), but rather, by being attached to Hans Karl, it is made

contingent upon a particular social setting. The philosophical theorem is nonsense, but the truth can nonetheless be made true in society. In the case of *Der Tor und der Tod*, the individual spectator is involved in the paradox of the soul by the idea of Death as his own hallucination, and the audience as a group are implicated only as representing the universal human "we." In *Der Schwierige*, by contrast, the spectator is not involved directly in the paradox of Hans Karl; the paradox is simply not there unless the audience take on the particular quality of society that gives it meaning. The problem of theater as ritual and theater as social model thus in a sense evaporates. The theater, as a vehicle for this comedy, is the scene of a philosophical ritual only *by* being the model of a particular society.

3

If we go on now to Hans Karl and the professor, perhaps a more obvious missed meeting, I think it is safe to say that the reason is the same as in the case of Stani's missed meetings, a needful self-preserving discretion in the society depicted. The professor is beyond the pale; he is, as even Hans Karl is forced to say of the new servant, an "impossible man" (L2 165). Hans Karl and Stani can find little enough to talk about with Neuhoff; with Professor Brücke they would find nothing at all. The professor, for all his contempt of the "salon philologist" Brückner (L2 227), is himself attempting to be a kind of salon philosopher. But such syntheses do not exist; there is really no "bridge" from his world to Hans Karl's, from philosophy (where the truth is an absurd theorem) to the salon (where the truth, somehow, is true).

The consequences of this recognition are considerable, for Professor Brücke does after all represent the world of the intellect (L2 215–16); and the impossibility of a meeting between him and Hans Karl thus reflects the existence of a point in the development of the social and of true self-esteem, and a corresponding point in the development of the inquiring intellect, at which the two can no longer communicate. Nor is this disjunction between the social and the intellectual merely a misunderstanding; if it were, it could be worked out in a typical comic confrontation. The true situation does not permit this. Hans Karl and the professor, even when in the same room, are out of reach of each other; human nature as a totality, that is, including some sort of "bridge" or communication between the social and the intellectual, can never be realized. The

whole tragic situation of the Chandos letter is thus present in this comic plot.

Or in other words, the stage of *Der Schwierige* is not substantially different from that of *Elektra* and the Oedipus plays, the stage of naked truth, despite Hofmannsthal's attempt in *Jedermann* to substitute a stage of popular cultural consciousness, and then a quasi-mimetic stage in *Pompilia* and *Das gerettete Venedig*, where the truth is loaded down with plot and detail. But what is a Viennese conversation comedy doing on this stage? Obviously *Der Schwierige* is comedy at the brink of the abyss; and perhaps comedy is the only vehicle by which the theater of the abyss can be fully realized. If we have grounds (the very word says it) for taking the play seriously, then it is not the abyss we are confronted with. Or to look at it the other way round, I have argued that the tragic theater of 1903–6 does not meet Hofmannsthal's own requirements for drama as a genre. Perhaps, in the course of his excursion into musical drama, and then under the stress of the war years, it became clear to Hofmannsthal that his turn toward comedy in 1907 should also have been a turn *toward* Chandos, not away from him, that only in the form of comedy can the theater of naked truth become truly a theater.

Or let us return to the idea of the fragility of aristocratic Viennese society in *Der Schwierige*. Neuhoff is right when he says to the professor:

> Alle diese Menschen, die Ihnen hier begegnen, existieren ja in Wirklichkeit gar nicht mehr. Das sind ja alles nur mehr Schatten. Niemand, der sich in diesen Salons bewegt, gehört zu der wirklichen Welt, in der die geistigen Krisen des Jahrhunderts sich entscheiden.[10] (L2 230)
>
> All these people who confront you here no longer exist in reality. They are all only shades. No one moving in these salons belongs to the real world in which the intellectual crises of the century are decided.

Again, the combination of self-esteem and human sensitivity that is portrayed in Hans Karl does not arise naturally, but must be fostered by a particular social environment, an inherently discreet environment in which certain things do not happen. And nothing is more fragile than such discretion. The very fact that Neuhoff's words can be uttered at Altenwyls already in a strong sense verifies what he says. "Ich mag diese indiskrete Maschine nicht!" (L2 195), says Hans Karl of the telephone – or of Neuhoff, who has just left the room. The presence of such "indiscreet machines" as Neuhoff and the professor, or the historical presence of what they represent,

the mechanically relentless indiscretion of the insecure intellect that talks in "editorials" (L2 198), spells the end of any society in which a Hans Karl is at home. Both Neuhoff and the professor, by seeking entrance to this society, necessarily undermine it, for in truth there is no "new hope" and no "bridge," no communication with what is now becoming the "real world" of intellectual crises. The one word that can pass between Hans Karl and the professor is the word "Pardon" (L2 249, 267); they do not meet, they only get in each other's way.

Der Schwierige is therefore not far from being a tragedy, for it foreshadows the inevitable collapse of a social situation which, while perhaps not strictly ideal, is fruitful in the sense of fostering certain otherwise unrealizable possibilities for human development and contact. But the actual form of tragedy would not have been appropriate. A tragedy, or any relatively melancholy treatment, would tend to present the inevitable disintegration of the social as itself one of "the century's intellectual crises" (which, after all, it is), thus to establish a point of view from which a true understanding of the social is as impossible as it is for Neuhoff to understand Helene; and without a full sympathetic understanding of the world that is doomed, there is no basis for tragedy in the first place. Melancholy would be as it were an indiscreet approach to this subject matter. The form of comedy is therefore dictated, but comedy with an ominous undertone that makes itself felt, first of all, in the violations of normal comic form represented by the various missed meetings.[11] The possibility of a melancholy approach is in fact satirized within the play, in Altenwyl's ridiculously unconversational lament on the demise of conversation (L2 215–22), which perhaps reminds us of the serious "Appell an die oberen Stände." *Der Schwierige* is comedy at the brink of the abyss, a vision of trivial pleasures threatened but still undimmed by the European catastrophe we know is in progress. Such pleasures perhaps do represent a serious "duty" (P3 179) for those who enjoy them, but we may not *think* of them thus without spoiling our pleasure and so leaving precisely that duty undone. It is already dangerous to say: "Wir schwärmen für triviale Menschen und triviale Unterhaltungen, nicht, Kari?" (L2 216). The play *is* a philosophical ritual only by immersing itself and its audience in a social atmosphere in which philosophical thought automatically becomes ridiculous except when offered as an instance of bizarre fancy. And correspondingly, the play reveals a tragic dimension in our existence only by resolutely refusing to acknowledge it in form.

II

HANS KARL'S RETURN

The present chapter treats what I will call the "submerged plot" of *Der Schwierige*, an extremely simple dramatic technique with disproportionately large consequences. *Der Schwierige* is Hofmannsthal's attempt to come to grips with several technical and philosophical problems in the practice of drama; but he does not employ radical innovations in form. His development, as always, is theoretical in the sense of being a reconsideration of existing conventions, a struggle to unlock what is already there in literary and artistic tradition. The plot of *Der Schwierige* is not exploded expressionistically, but rather its management shows a subtle reflection upon the whole relation of a dramatic fiction to the consciousness of an audience. The technique that emerges, interestingly, is also used by Kleist.[1]

I

Der Schwierige is comedy at the brink of the abyss; and the abyss is simply reality, the reality of the war we know is in progress although it is hardly mentioned, and reality in the form of an intellectual process that will inevitably obliterate the society depicted. Critics have been disturbed in their dating of the play's fiction by Hofmannsthal's remark in 1917 that the aristocracy of *Der Schwierige* no longer exists "in der Realität."[2] But this is almost exactly what Neuhoff says to the professor, and is true only in a limited sense; Neuhoff himself is engaged in ingratiating himself with that supposedly non-existent society. The Viennese aristocracy depicted does exist in 1917 (at least for the purpose of Hofmannsthal's fiction), but in a world somehow separate from Neuhoff's world of "intellectual crises"; and it is the latter world that bears the title "Realität." Hofmannsthal had said in 1914 "that politics and intellect are identical" (P2 190), and these words now come back to haunt him; for it follows that *social* existence is

separated from the political (we think of Hans Karl's reluctance to speak in the *Herrenhaus*), which means that social existence no longer affects world-shaping events and so no longer "really" exists. Barring the possibility of an amalgamation of intellectual with social existence, the social and conversational world of Altenwyl's party, "always only the few old faces, no artists or other celebrities" (L2 215), is so hopelessly isolated as to be arguably non-existent.

But in what sense can "reality," if it is really that, be regarded as an abyss or a danger? If there is no hope whatever of avoiding a particular danger, then the idea of "danger" is not strictly applicable. My point is that at least in *Der Schwierige*, the danger or abyss is represented primarily by the *concept* of reality, which, once dominant in our mental life, becomes an abdication of our quasi-artistic control over the shape of our own existence. In *Der Schwierige* social existence, as a form of resistance against the concept of reality, assumes what had been the function of art for the homecomer, the momentary revelation of that true human dominion or power which we constantly lose sight of (this being the paradox of the soul) in the process of renunciation by which our world is constituted.[3] Thus the circle is closed. For Chandos, social existence is the equivalent of silence; for the homecomer, that silence itself arrives at a crisis which requires the philosophical support of art; and in *Der Schwierige*, this artistic function is carried out by society itself, both within the fiction and in the socially open theater of comedy. I will try to show, however, that not only the play's larger cultural sphere of reference, but also the concrete plot, presents the concept of reality as a danger, in that the union of Hans Karl and Helene is achieved at the brink of an abyss that is reality in the sense of plain fact.

2

Commentators on the second conversation between Hans Karl and Helene, in Act III, Scene viii, generally fail to ask the most immediate question about the plot at this point: *why does Hans Karl return to the soirée*?[4] It is generally assumed that Helene is speaking for the author when she later answers this question as follows:

> Was Sie hier hinausgetrieben hat, das war Ihr Mißtrauen, Ihre Furcht vor Ihrem eigenen Selbst ... Vor Ihrem eigentlichen tieferen Willen. Ja, der ist unbequem, der führt einen nicht den angenehmsten Weg. Er hat Sie eben hierher zurückgeführt. (L2 297)

What drove you out of here was your mistrust, your fear of your own self ... Of your true deeper will. Yes, the will is uncomfortable, it doesn't take us by the pleasantest ways. And it brought you back here.

While on a deep psychological level Helene may be right, still, on the level of simple fact she is wrong. Hans Karl has returned to the party for a specific reason that has no connection whatever with his unacknowledged love for her; and he has had no intention of speaking to her.

His first words make the situation plain: "Helene, Sie sind noch hier?" (L2 293), "are you still here?" This question is absurd under the circumstances (Helene points out, "I live here"), and actually expresses nothing but his embarrassment at having to talk to Helene again. In the early notes for the play we read, "Hans Karl comes back, somewhat embarrassed to find the other woman still there."[5] This other woman is probably the woman who becomes Antoinette; but in the final version the motif of Hans Karl's "return," and his "embarrassment" at finding a lady "still there," has been transferred to the meeting with Helene. In fact he has not expected to see Helene again; and on the level of conscious motivation, he does not wish to.

His reappearance at the door of the salon, in Act II, is no basis for supposing that he wants to speak further with Helene. Obviously he is concerned about the state in which he has left her; but when she asks, "Did he say anything more?" (L2 267), the answer is no, and it is emphasized later that he has left no message for her (L2 276–7). As far as he is concerned, his relationship with her is terminated at the end of their first tête-à-tête. That *she* pronounces the word "Adieu!" (L2 266) is significant. While it may be true of Hans Karl, as she has said to him, that "someone who thinks you have said good-bye forever might find you saying hello to him again" (L2 259), the same is not true, or does not seem to be, of herself. Antoinette has remarked of her, "She takes nothing back" (L2 247), and Hans Karl has said to her, "in you resides the Necessary" (L2 261). Part of his attachment to her is the feeling that everything she does is right, proper and necessary; an "Adieu!" from her must therefore have the same definitive force as the "I do" (L2 265) he had heard in his imagination. The relationship, as far as he knows, is therefore finished; he has no more to say to her, and the embarrassed question that opens their second private conversation shows this.

The stage directions at the end of Act II tell a certain amount about the real reason Hans Karl later returns. After Helene has

said her "Adieu" we read: "Hans Karl heads out to the right. The famous man approaches him. Hans Karl looks around to the left. Crescence enters from the left" (L2 266). Confronted by the importunate Professor Brücke, Hans Karl seeks escape to the left, but when Crescence enters he again reverses direction and "hurries off to the right" (L2 267), for Crescence is the last person in the world he wants to encounter now. He has made a botch of the task she had set him, and the prospect of explaining it to her is so thoroughly unappealing that, to avoid it, he permits himself an uncharacteristic rudeness toward the professor. As soon as he gets through the door, however, it occurs to him that by leaving Crescence alone with Helene he may have made a mistake, since Crescence's idea of what has passed between him and Helene is bound to be embarrassingly inaccurate. It is for this reason, in order to keep Crescence from saying the wrong thing, that he "appears again at the right-hand door" (L2 267). He now wishes to speak with Crescence, *not* with Helene; and only after ascertaining that it is too late to keep the ladies apart, does he finally turn and go.

His behavior from this point on is remarkably cool. According to Neuhoff later (L2 279–80), he gives himself about a half hour to arrange his departure inconspicuously, during all of which time he successfully avoids Crescence, who is frantically searching for him (L2 291); if Crescence has learned the truth from Helene, she will not be an easy person to deal with. Then, finally, he manages to leave the party, and on his way out of the house lights up a cigar (L2 277), not the action of a man seriously dissatisfied with himself. He is rattled, however, when, just before getting through the outer gate, he has to hide in order to avoid Stani and Hechingen, the two men for whom he had been supposed to arrange marriages, one new one and one old one (L2 268–9). If it were either man alone, he could manage the situation; but under the circumstances he would have to speak to each one privately while ignoring the other, an embarrassing predicament in which he finds himself later anyway, though he now avoids it by hiding.

It is this last incident that forces him to think about the misunderstandings he may have caused. Hechingen's situation, though bad, is at least no worse than before, and whatever damage could result from a meeting between Helene and Crescence has already been done anyway; but Stani's presence at the party could have serious consequences. Hans Karl knows only too well that Crescence is a woman who sees things as she wants them to be. Suppose she

deduces from Helene's agitation that Stani's suit via Hans Karl has been successful (this being what she actually does think), and suppose she convinces Stani. The result would be an embarrassing and perhaps painful confrontation involving the three people to whom Hans Karl is most attached in the world. He must therefore return to Altenwyls, to forestall whatever consequences he can, and the people he must talk to are Stani and Crescence – *not* Helene, who he hopes will not yet know anything about the intrigues that have been afoot. The situation with Helene no longer requires his attention; it has been finished off, if not happily then at least not embarrassingly, and is now by way of fading into the past through a haze of cigar-smoke.

But before returning, Hans Karl telephones to his own portress that he intends to leave at seven the next morning for "Gebhardtskirchen" (L2 308). His reason is given by Stani's unwittingly apt remark, "And uncle Kari, when he saw what a mess he had made, took to his heels" (L2 292). In the event that there *have* been embarrassing confrontations, Hans Karl, in "Gebhardtskirchen," will at least not have to face their consequences. But the telephone call also shows his assumption that he and Helene are finished. He returns to the party to have a word with Stani and Crescence; if he can avoid seeing Helene, so much the better.

3

A distinction must be made between the interpretations offered in earlier chapters and the argument so far in the present chapter, which in my opinion is not an interpretation but a simple statement of the presumed factual premises on which the plot is built. The statement that Hans Karl returns to the soirée to speak to Crescence or Stani, and wishes to avoid Helene, is I think no more disputable than the statement that Hans Karl and Crescence are brother and sister. These facts need to be stated not because they are obscure or concealed, but because critics have unanimously ignored them in favor of discussion on a higher philosophical level. I make this point now, for I am about to embark on a lengthy elucidation of Hans Karl's second conversation with Helene, an elucidation that I contend is for the most part also not interpretive, but sets forth what is meant to be as plain to the audience as, say, any chair or table on the stage.

After the awkward greeting in the entrance-hall, Hans Karl notices something unusual in Helene's voice and bearing:

Hans Karl: Sie sehen anders aus als sonst. Es ist etwas geschehen!
Helene: Ja, es ist etwas geschehen.
Hans Karl: Wann, so plötzlich?
Helene: Vor einer Stunde, glaub ich. (L2 293)

HK: You look different. Something has happened. – H: Yes, something has happened. – HK: When, just suddenly? – H: An hour ago, it seems to me.

Obviously there is a misunderstanding. Hans Karl fears that since his own departure something had "happened" between Helene and either Crescence or Stani, whereas Helene's "something" refers cryptically to the emotional and moral crisis precipitated by their earlier conversation, and to her decision to follow him and confess her love regardless of consequences. In the words "glaub ich," she indicates that as far as she is concerned the *time* of her crisis is immaterial; all that counts is her resolve to carry out what she has decided on. And the "glaub ich" also suggests that Hans Karl ought to know as much about what has "happened," about her emotional state, as she does.

But Hans Karl has no idea of what is in the wind. Though Helene's demonstrative calm makes him unsure of himself, he is still worried that Crescence may have committed a blunder. With this in mind he frames his next question, "Etwas Unangenehmes?" (L2 294), "Something unpleasant?" to which Helene replies, "Wie?" This "Wie?" "What?" "I beg your pardon," marks her first suspicion that his questioning is aimed at something specific. Up to here she has assumed he is interested in what had "happened" to her inwardly, why she "looks different"; now she recognizes that he has a definite possibility in mind, something "unpleasant" that he fears may have happened, but of which she knows nothing. Therefore she now also understands that he has returned to the party to prevent the unpleasantness he is worried about, *not* to resume their conversation.

Hans Karl, however, who still supposes that something tangible has happened in his absence, interprets Helene's "Wie?" to mean that whatever *has* happened is not something she chooses to regard as unpleasant; and this opens several disturbing possibilities which he now gropes toward with the question, "Etwas Aufregendes?" "Some excitement?" Perhaps, despite his own clumsiness, Stani's and Crescence's courting of Helene has succeeded, and Stani and Helene have reached an understanding; there is even the possibility, which Hans Karl had refused to dismiss in Act I (L2 199), that

Helene has reached an understanding with Neuhoff. It is only after these possibilities have occurred to Hans Karl that he asks, "Etwas Irreparables?" "Something irreparable?" Before Helene's dismissal of the idea of unpleasantness ("Wie?"), this question would have referred to the ruin of Stani's chances; now it refers equally well even to Helene's possible acceptance of Stani. In Act 1, when Stani says of Helene, "And with time she will adore me" (L2 208), Hans Karl's muttered response shows him less than happy at that prospect, and his misgivings are part of what appears in the question, "Etwas Irreparables?" which may be seen as a stirring of what Helene later calls his deeper will, his desire to marry her himself.

But the mention of the "irreparable" also has an effect on Helene. She understands by now that she and Hans Karl are talking at cross-purposes, and with the non-committal "Ah ja, das schon," in response to his "Etwas Aufregendes?" she has begun to draw him out, to probe for the specific possibility he has in mind. The idea of *irreparability*, however, reminds her of the earlier conversation (her irrevocable "Adieu") in which he had taken the lead, and so makes clear to her that if the same is not to happen all over again, *she* must seize the initiative, which she does by drawing his attention to her discarded cloak. This puts the two of them on a relatively equal footing; she still does not know why he returned to the party, but he is now also puzzled by why she had intended to go out. What we have here is "conversation" in the fullest sense. Neither party understands the whole situation; neither, strictly speaking, is *using* language for a particular end. Rather, it is as if the language were using the speakers, shaping their destiny in accordance with *its* nature, creating them anew as individuals, making them what they truly are.

Once her move for keeping Hans Karl in suspense has been executed, Helene returns to the attack by asking with merciless directness why he has returned. He has betrayed his uncertainty about how to phrase what he fears might have happened; even without knowing why, she knows therefore that her question will embarrass him – which it does. For by now *he* knows she is under the impression (or at least had been) that he has wanted to speak to her; to tell her the truth now, that he wants to speak to Crescence and Stani, would be tactless. He must think up an *excuse* for returning, and he uses for this purpose the time taken up by his first two evasive answers and by the business of being seated. He finally hits on the idea of being dissatisfied with himself for having dragged

"something past" (L2 295) into their previous conversation, which has the strategic advantage that it will enable him, should the occasion arise, to conclude that he ought to have spoken earlier not about the past but about the present or future, thus about the marriage with Stani that he has after all promised to support. But Helene gives him no opportunity for an "easy transition" (L2 163) – she does not ask him what he had really meant to discuss with her earlier – and he must take refuge in the unconvincing conclusion, "ich bin wiedergekommen, um Ihnen Ihre volle Freiheit, pardon, das Wort ist mir ganz ungeschickt über die Lippen gekommen – um Ihnen Ihre volle Unbefangenheit zurückzugeben" (L2 296), "I returned in order to give you your complete freedom – excuse me, I didn't mean to say that – to give you back your complete unconstraint." These words express not his reason for returning but an excuse after the fact; and Helene recognizes this when she replies skeptically, "Also das haben Sie mir sagen wollen."

Now Hans Karl attempts to stand up, as he had at a crucial point in the previous conversation (L2 262), but now Helene does not let him. She exploits the initiative: "Aha. Ich dank Ihnen sehr. Und jetzt werd ich Ihnen sagen, warum Sie wiedergekommen sind" (L2 296). Now she will tell *him* why he returned. Out of sheer politeness he has agreed to pretend he had returned to her house in order to speak to her. She sees through his pretence, yet still accepts it as a premise, but without accepting his awkward elaboration on it, his excuse. She is operating at the brink of the abyss; she bases her conversational strategy on an extremely tenuous interpretation (we have already laughed at the idea of irresistible "will" in Neuhoff's mouth) of a premise she knows is false. She presses forward with her confession *in the full knowledge that Hans Karl has had no intention of returning specifically to her*. She is taking an enormous risk, performing "the impossible" (L2 298) as fully as if she had actually gone forth into the night.

But she has made her decision, and, looking straight at him, she says to Hans Karl, "Sie sind wiedergekommen, weil – ja! es gibt das! gelobt sei Gott im Himmel!" (L2 297), whereupon she breaks into laughter. "You came back because – yes, there is such a thing! praise God in heaven!" What does she suddenly recognize the existence of? Hans Karl's true self, which desires to retract the earlier "Adieu" between them? This would contradict her knowledge that the meeting in the entrance hall is pure chance; and she herself says, only a few minutes later, "Of course I still don't know if you can truly love anyone" (L2 299).

We can understand what she does mean by going back to an earlier speech of Hans Karl's in the conversation with Antoinette:

es gibt einen Zufall, der macht scheinbar alles mit uns, wie er will – aber mitten in dem Hierhin- und Dorthingeworfenwerden und der Stumpfheit und Todesangst, da spüren wir und wissen es auch, es gibt halt auch eine Notwendigkeit, die wählt uns von Augenblick zu Augenblick, die geht ganz leise, ganz dicht am Herzen vorbei und doch so schneidend scharf wie ein Schwert. (L2 245)

there is an accidentalness that apparently does whatever it will with us – but in the midst of our confusion and dullness and mortal fear, we sense, indeed we know, that there is also a necessity that picks us out from moment to moment, that passes right next to our heart, very softly, yet sharp as a sword.

What Hans Karl had understood in combat is what Helene now understands: that chance and necessity are not mutually exclusive, that even in a world of utter accidents there is still something by virtue of which our existence makes sense. Namely, she knows that the present encounter with Hans Karl is pure "Zufall," "accident," that it had not been his intention to seek her out again; but she also recognizes that if she has the courage, this "Zufall" can be realized as a higher necessity, "Notwendigkeit."

The relation between chance and necessity is not simple. What is the difference between something that "does what it will with us" and something else that chooses us, "picks us out"? Let us look at another earlier speech of Hans Karl's, which bears directly on the situation with Helene:

Alles was geschieht, das macht der Zufall. Es ist nicht zum Ausdenken, wie zufällig wir alle sind ... Darin ist aber so ein Grausen, daß der Mensch etwas hat finden müssen, um sich aus diesem Sumpf herauszuziehen, bei seinem eigenen Schopf. Und so hat er das Institut gefunden, das aus dem Zufälligen und Unreinen das Notwendige, das Bleibende und das Gültige macht: die Ehe. (L2 243)

"Everything that happens is done by chance. We cannot imagine how accidental we all are." But this quality of existence is not merely terrifying. Precisely our terror, "Grausen," shows us an existence with no form or order of its own, and so opens the possibility of *our* establishing "the necessary, the enduring, the valid," as we do in marriage. The "choosing" of us by necessity is thus a process of choosing in which we ourselves must participate, but without presuming on this participation, without pretending

that we possess free choice in our destiny. "Reality" is a state of mind by which we abdicate our power and responsibility toward existence. "Chance," as Hans Karl uses the word, denotes the raw material, the realm of choice, from which either "reality" or "necessity" can be formed, the latter being an order that involves (as our state of mind) the tacit acceptance and exercise of responsibility. Reality suppresses or denies the experience of chance; necessity accepts and exploits that experience. And the experience of chance, of chaos, of "how accidental we all are," in turn reveals necessity for what it truly is, the token of our own human formative presence in the order of things that includes us. Hans Karl means that precisely the utter accidentalness of our existence opens the *possibility* of a higher order, which it is not only our duty, but our very nature, to realize by decisive action, as in marriage. And it is this potential necessity (revealed in the experience of chance), the potential for significance in even the most bizarre accidents, that Helene means when she says, "es gibt das!"[6]

The accidentalness of the present situation is what Helene then stresses when she continues:

> Aber es ist vielleicht schade, daß Sie wiedergekommen sind. Denn hier ist vielleicht nicht der rechte Ort, das zu sagen, was gesagt werden muß – vielleicht hätte das – aber jetzt muß es halt hier gesagt werden. (L2 297)

It is perhaps "too bad" that Hans Karl has returned to her house! Helene is in effect still laughing. She *has* made her decision to press forward no matter what; and she now sees that by virtue of this decision "Zufall" is no longer frightening, that whatever coincidence happens to have brought Hans Karl back to her house at just the right moment must become the necessity on which her future is founded. That such a thing should be possible is what strikes her as funny. She does not resist or resent the accidental, as Antoinette does, but accepts it, thanks God for it, and goes to work. "There is such a thing" as higher necessity, but that necessity is something we ourselves must *create* from the raw material of chance, from a "chaos of dead things," and Helene can now even toy with the idea that things are perhaps working out *too* easily. The enormity she had been preparing to carry out – the content of the letter she has by now already written, and concerning which she has told the servant that he must remain there while her father reads it, because of the shock it will give him (L2 278) – all this is in a sense wasted by the anticlimax of the meeting in the entrance hall. What now passes between Helene and Hans Karl is still "eine Enormität" (L2 299),

but one which, paradoxically, will lead to an entirely respectable engagement and marriage. The union of these destined lovers occurs in an atmosphere wholly different from the musical climax that enfolds Bacchus and Ariadne.

I should perhaps pause here to justify my use of the concepts of chance and accident in English, rather than "contingency," which can also translate "Zufall." Contingency implies the operation of a cause, even if the cause has little to do with what we perceive as the nature of the effect, and belief in the presence of causes belongs to precisely the state of mind Hofmannsthal associates with "reality," the assumption that our free activity has no influence on the way things basically are. For all we know, there *are* causes for everything, but the all-important *experience* of "Zufall" – a force that does with us "what it will," not what it must – is the experience of an uncaused, orderless existence in which our human articulation of order makes the difference. The whole question, in *Der Schwierige*, is looked at from the perspective of experience, not that of absolute truth or validity. In a sense there is a cause for Hans Karl's return, but only in a sense. By not being acknowledged, not being allowed to prevail in experience, that cause, so to speak, is crowded out of existence, leaving for Hans Karl and Helene the experience of utter *chance* or *accident* on which to build the human order of "necessity."

4

Even at the point we have reached, however, the threatening abyss of reality is still there. Helene must now avoid giving Hans Karl an occasion to state the real reason he has returned, even though this is what she had insisted on knowing only a moment earlier. Now that she understands that her task is to transform chance into fate, it no longer matters why Hans Karl has returned; the explicit mention of that "real" reason would only disrupt the process of creative transformation. She therefore talks vaguely about his "self" and so *suggests* that he has meant to retract their "Adieu," but does not *state* this opinion directly enough for him to take issue with it. She goes as far as she dares when she says, with eyes averted, "Such partings are not hard for you, but sometimes what happens in you, when you are alone, is hard" (L2 298). But even here she avoids saying directly that he has returned for the purpose of repairing their relation; in fact her choice of words ("*solche* Abschiede," "manchmal") suggests that his behavior now is merely typical of

him, with no special relation to her. Then she immediately changes the subject in order to make her confession, and only after Hans Karl produces "these impossible tears" (L2 299), only after he has twice managed to pronounce the word "du" and has thus in effect made his own confession, does she finally say straight out, "Dein Wille, dein Selbst, versteh mich. Er hat dich umgedreht, wie du allein warst, und dich zu mir zurückgeführt." "I mean your will, your self. It turned you around when you were alone, and brought you back to me." This statement is not *accurate*; but it is still a *true* statement, in being agreed upon by the people whom it concerns – by virtue, in fact, of their creative "will." Helene no longer fears that Hans Karl will correct her; he has shown that he is also inclined to allow their present encounter to operate as fate rather than chance. "Reality," in the form of the plain facts of the case, has in effect been talked out of existence.

But the scene is not over. Helene concludes, "denn ich bin in dich verliebt, und ich will . . . Von deinem Leben, von deiner Seele, von allem – meinen Teil!" "for I am in love with you and I want – of your life, your soul, everything – my part! " And Hans Karl now collects himself in order to respond (as if he had not repeatedly prompted her confession):

> Helene, everything you [Sie] say perturbs me immeasurably for your sake, naturally for your sake! You are mistaken about me; I have an impossible character. (L2 299–300)

The reason for his "perturbation" is that she has not once suggested the idea of *marriage*, and has not made it at all clear what she means by her "part" of him, or how she had intended to finish the sentence, "Ich will, daß du mich –" (L2 298). He himself had earlier indicated that he thinks of her as a marrying type, not a mistress. But still, if she had carried out her intention of chasing him into the night, the result would have been a considerable scandal, enough to make Antoinette appear the soul of discretion by contrast, and certainly not an acceptable basis for marriage.[7] The chance meeting in the entrance hall has made marriage a possibility; but Helene, even in the midst of her tearful confession, does not give any sign that she is aware of this.

Hans Karl had earlier spoken of giving Helene her freedom, but it is now she who gives him his. She releases chaos; she plunges them both into a mire of unspeakable possibilities and misunderstandings, leaving to him the task of setting things right, which he begins to do by saying, "ich hab einen unmöglichen Charakter." In

speaking of his character, he shows that he will interpret her advance as a proposal of marriage; but he cannot simply accept the proposal, for as he has said earlier:

> Sympathy is all right, but to ride around on it would be unspeakably indiscreet. Therefore we have to be on guard, precisely when we seem to understand each other very well. (L2 259)

Hans Karl and Helene, in Act III, seem to understand each other perfectly, but then so had Hans Karl and Antoinette two years ago at "Grünleiten." The understanding expressed by a sympathetic bursting into tears (we think of *Werther*) is not sufficient to justify marriage; and it is his consciousness of this insufficiency that prompts Hans Karl, in the words "You are mistaken," to open for himself again the option of explaining the real reason for his return, in order to dismiss the present conversation as a "misunderstanding," if this should prove necessary.

We must remind ourselves of how close a parallel is drawn between Helene and Antoinette in the plot. Hans Karl had become involved with Antoinette when she had been "in great danger of falling into the hands of an unworthy man" (L2 241) – which recalls the relation between Helene and Neuhoff. That Neuhoff has ingratiated himself with Helene is "no joke" to Hans Karl (L2 196); and one of his aims in the first conversation had been to make clear how perfect and beatific *her* marriage must be, whereby part of what he means is to dissuade her from accepting the Prussian. Even his return to the party has to do with his concern that a faux pas by Crescence or Stani might leave Neuhoff a clear field.

And then there is Antoinette's accusation of him: "Yes, that's the little trick you used to get round me, that you're no seducer, no ladies' man, only a friend, and a true friend at that" (L2 244). If we were so inclined, we could apply these words to Helene. Merely by acting as a friend, Hans Karl drives her to the point where she is ready to risk her existence for him, without even a clear notion of what she expects to gain. She is ready to run after him into the night, which also recalls the moonlit walk with Hans Karl that Edine had earlier reminded Antoinette of (L2 238).

The parallel between Helene and Antoinette is very close, and if Hans Karl, after Helene's confession, were simply to fall into her arms, it would be complete. But he does not. He demands more of Helene, and she acknowledges the solemnity of the occasion by acquiescing in his return to the formal "Sie"; then he continues, "I am a man who has all sorts of misunderstandings on his con-

science" (L2 300), thus again approaching the idea of the factual misunderstanding (why did he return?) on which the present conversation is based. But she again steers clear of this dangerous subject when, in saying with a smile, "Yes, it seems so," she takes the word "misunderstandings," "Mißverständnisse," as a euphemism for his various liaisons; and he acknowledges her grasp of the situation by responding in kind, though not at all delicately, "I have hurt so many women."

He cannot afford to be delicate here, for he is in the difficult position of having to ensure that Helene not take literally what he himself has said to her earlier about marriage, about the miracle of two people's becoming "as *one*" (L2 265). That may have been a deep truth, but not a practical truth, not a truth that can be made use of in either deciding upon or conducting a marriage. The sanctity of marriage is a "necessity" that must be *created* by a constant overcoming of real problems, by what Hechingen, with the benefit of Hans Karl's coaching, calls "an eternal beginning over" (L2 285). Helene accedes to this turn in the conversation by answering, "Love isn't sugary" (L2 300), and Hans Karl then continues to suggest the difficulties she would face in marriage with him, until finally she says:

> Begehren ist Ihre Natur. Aber nicht: das – oder das – sondern von einem Wesen: – alles – für immer! Es hätte eine die Kraft haben müssen, Sie zu zwingen, daß Sie von ihr immer mehr und mehr begehrt hätten. Bei der wären Sie dann geblieben. (L2 301)
>
> Desiring is your nature. But not just desiring this or that. Desiring from one being – everything – for ever! A woman would have needed the power to compel you to desire ever more and more from her. With her you would have remained.

The importance of this speech can be gauged by Hans Karl's answer, "Wie du mich kennst!" "How well you know me!" By changing back of his own accord to "du," in response to the idea of permanence in love, he shows that he has made his decision. These words are his proposal of marriage.

Are we to infer that he is suddenly overwhelmed by how well Helene "knows" him? That her little speech somehow solves for him the riddle of his own nature? If we read the exchange in this way, then we must assume that the language of the conversation has reverted to naive referentiality, and so has become empty of meaning for *us*, since we possess no basis on which to judge the accuracy of the assertions made. In fact, accuracy is no more at

issue here than elsewhere in the conversation. Helene is not making a judgment about Hans Karl's character. What she does is interpret his *objections* to marriage (that his character is impossible, that he is an "egoist" and "inconstant") as if they were *requirements* or desires or challenges, a form of "Begehren," and as if his requiring that she deal with these objections were *her* doing, as if she had forced him to desire it of her. Moreover, she thus reinterprets the whole conversation by reminding him that at the beginning he had wished only to avoid her, or to find out what had happened in his absence, but that she had maneuvered him into desiring to hear her confession of love, which he had prompted eagerly, and that now, by being consistently ambiguous about what she wants from him, she has brought him to the point of discussing marriage. She claims, in essence, not that she *can* make him desire more and more from her, but that she *has* done so. And most important, she makes this claim without actually stating it, under the guise of an untenable psychological diagnosis that has to be seen through in order to be recognized for what it in truth is, the self-interpreting and self-shaping of that conversation which, for the time being, is the very existence of the two speakers. She reminds Hans Karl, in other words, that she is a more adroit and discreet lover than Antoinette, who is "dizzied" by her husband's attempt at a new conversational "tone" (L2 284). Helene is not dizzied by conversation, but rather, like Hans Karl, she affirms it and lives in it, in the endlessly problematic situation of being at once creator and creature in the element of language. This is the sense in which she "knows" Hans Karl.

Antoinette had said earlier to Hans Karl: "If you had your way, one wouldn't only be in love with you, but love you beyond reason, and for yourself alone, and not even only as a man – but – I have no idea how to say it" (L2 244). Whatever word Antoinette may be groping for here, Helene settles the issue by loving Hans Karl *as a problem*, equivalent to the problem of self-consciousness, the problem of human divinity and human mortality, the problem of language, which requires of us a ceaseless, dizzying inventiveness in indirection and irony, and denies us any immutable sense of either the self or the world as a point of reference. In her speech about desire she indicates obliquely that in the very midst of confessing her love she has maintained perfect discretion in an extremely difficult situation, without even knowing its details, and so has maneuvered an especially "difficult" individual, whom it is useless "to try to fix" (L2 259), into the position of "fixing" himself. She

cannot simply say she has achieved this, for to do so would violate precisely the discretion by which she has achieved it; but Hans Karl understands, and accepts her interpretation of what she has done, in the words "Wie du mich kennst!"

Now, for the time being, matters are resolved. The lovers have put together for themselves out of sheer language, in defiance of "reality," a pair of masks or philosophically symbolic rôles that are more *genuine* than the selves they had been before, if not as "real." Like the lovers in "Die Beiden," they achieve communication by failing to communicate, indeed by demolishing the whole structure of presupposition, the whole idea of language as reference to a pre-existing reality and expression of a pre-existing individual speaker, on which the notion of communication is ordinarily founded. Helene now embroiders a bit on the rôle she has accepted, by talking about her long and faithful waiting for Hans Karl, and so acknowledges that in conversation even the exercise of control is a submission (even our choosing is a being chosen), a participation, on which basis the betrothal is settled. But again, the resolution arrives *only* when Hans Karl says, "Wie du mich kennst!" If we assume that his real reason for returning to the soirée had been what Helene calls his "will," then the whole of the second tête-à-tête becomes merely a sentimental love-confession. Actually this conversation is an extremely subtle verbal encounter between two infinitely discreet individuals; and that it ends in a betrothal thus represents discretion's triumph over its own reticent nature, a triumph that consists precisely in the impossibility of saying whether it belongs to the individuals who bring it about or to the verbal medium in which they blossom. "Form ist Maske," says Hofmannsthal, "aber ohne Form weder Geben noch Nehmen von Seele zu Seele."[8] Constantly present behind the forms of this conversation, and so unmasking them as *mere* forms, is the specter of reality or fact as a danger, Hans Karl's real reason for returning; only the suppression of this reality enables the chaos of chance to be transmuted into a higher necessity that justifies marriage.

5

The most important consequence of this argument has to do with the idea of "Konversation." Lothar Wittmann speaks for many when he explains the interminable misunderstandings in *Der Schwierige* by "the human failure of 'conversation'";[9] and he then takes at face value (p. 151) Neuhoff's supposedly flattering remark

that Hans Karl "prefers to pay in gold; he has never gotten used to the paper money of daily verbal intercourse. In speech he cannot but proffer his intimate self, which is priceless" (L2 192).[10] Hans Karl's discomfort with the misunderstandings of conversation, according to this argument, is the result of his need for a more genuine use of language, "a directness ... that excludes all 'misunderstanding'" and that is made possible by love (p. 159). A prime example of this supposed new directness in language is of course Helene's asking why he has returned (p. 165), with the words, "Ja, ich frag Sie direkt" (L2 294). But here Wittmann's argument breaks down, for that question is never answered. The misunderstanding that haunts the whole final conversation is, to be sure, transmuted into fate or "necessity," *but it is never cleared up*. Love does not conquer misunderstanding, but rather exploits it, lives on it: "ja! es gibt das! gelobt sei Gott im Himmel!" (L2 297). Without the fundamental factual misunderstanding that we have discussed, that last conversation could not happen, and the union of Hans Karl and Helene could not be achieved in the form of "necessity" or marriage.

In the final analysis, that is, the misunderstandings of conversation are valued positively, not negatively. Without misunderstanding, without the failure of communication, without the futile groping for words that Heidegger speaks of, without the spilling of the wine in "Die Beiden," the true content of language is never revealed. If we understand each other perfectly, or think we do, if our "sympathy" is sufficiently manifest, sufficiently formulable, for us to "ride around on it," then the content of language appears to be exhausted in the fully understood content of the particular utterance, and the true content of language, what we truly have in common, our understanding before understanding – as represented by the figure in the dust, or Chandos' everyday ecstasies, or Hans Karl's and Helene's love of each other as problems – is forgotten. Or again, if we understand each other perfectly, then the object of our understanding assumes the character of "reality," in relation to which we abdicate our formative right. Misunderstanding, on the other hand, as in the love-conversation, conquers or suppresses reality, and makes possible the true human order of necessity. Nor will it do to object that Hans Karl constantly struggles *against* misunderstanding; for misunderstanding does not happen except in the striving to make oneself understood. Here we have another form of Hofmannsthal's Scylla and Charybdis. In order for language to achieve its full potency as our element, as "*the* social

element," we must be firm in our determination to understand each other (thus exposing ourselves to misunderstanding), but not so firm as to delude ourselves into believing we succeed. "Conversation" in this new sense, as language that is always open to its inevitable misunderstandings, thus becomes in *Der Schwierige* the optimal linguistic vessel of truth, truth on the level where it cannot be stated without being misstated.

A further consequence of the foregoing involves a passage from Kierkegaard that Hofmannsthal had in mind while writing *Der Schwierige*: "Whatever is meant to be good must always be 'right now' . . . whatever does not happen right now belongs to evil" (A 69).[11] The parallel in *Der Schwierige* is Stani's maxim, "Decision must spring from the instant. Right now or not at all, that's my motto!" (L2 183). But what Stani merely says is what Hans Karl actually does, in deciding to marry Helene entirely on the spur of the moment, only in the words "Wie du mich kennst!" and only after his sincere renunciation of any earlier hopes or intentions. It may be true that he and Helene are perfectly suited to each other, but suitability is not the basis of their union. The figure of Hans Karl includes a self-love so complete as to obliterate any permanent configuration of self to which the notion of suitability might be applied. He must be loved not as a person, "not even as a man," but purely as a problem; and his marriage cannot happen except on a decision that is still more instantaneous than Stani's had been, with no delay whatever between decision and implementation. Again, Stani's speaking is the mirror of Hans Karl's being and doing. Stani is full of youthful arrogance, but he is not *wrong* in seeing Hans Karl as "a great egoist" (L2 188) who insists on his "full freedom" (L2 183), his freedom even from possessing the permanent qualities of a self, which means that desire or decision must always come upon him all at once, never as a gradual process of constriction. "Desiring" is his nature, to the extent that he has any nature at all; and he himself has said, "The moment is not evil, only the wanting to hang on is impermissible" (L2 243). Anything that lasts a length of time without awakening new desires is automatically experienced as a constraint. Even his decision to bind himself once and for all must be, paradoxically, a free decision, taken upon the instant, and can certainly not be understood as the final ripening of a "moral resolution made during his recovery."[12] On this point, Staiger makes good sense when he argues that Hans Karl's *thinking* about marriage in the hospital had been a distortion and violation of the *truth* vouchsafed him "in a chosen instant" (L2

264).[13] True decision must be "gleich," right now. And correspondingly, truth cannot be accumulated and gathered into the content of an utterance, but is revealed only instantaneously, in the failure of utterance or communication or understanding.

Nor is it unimportant that Hans Karl's decision to marry Helene is likely to cause difficulties for the Hechingens. Perhaps, strictly speaking, he has no moral duty here; but he clearly has a sense of something like paternal obligation toward both Hechingen and Antoinette. When he makes a remark about "conflicting obligations" (L2 184), however, it is Stani who *says*, with affected ruthlessness, "One has the choice of which ones to meet," while again it is he himself who must actually *make* such a choice, in that he breaks his word to Antoinette and leaves her to her fate. Complications of this sort cannot be resolved by thinking about them; there is no way for Hans Karl to satisfy his obligations toward both Helene and the Hechingens. He *is* as Stani still only wishes to be; he simply decides, on the instant, once and for all.

Two points are especially interesting here. The first is the atmosphere of unresolved incongruity at the end of *Der Schwierige* – in Helene's remark about its being perhaps "too bad" that Hans Karl has returned, in the need for Stani to improvise an "official" ending (L2 314), in the failure of a double reconciliation like that of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. The ideas of truth and true decision perhaps make this incongruity understandable. Too much symmetry, too neat a tying up of loose ends, would produce the feeling of a fully self-reconciled and justified world, a world in which truth, as the child of misunderstanding, of a fundamental dissatisfaction with language, can no longer happen. But we are still puzzled by the strong echo of the sense of continuing tragic imperfection at the end of *Elektra*. What we have in *Der Schwierige* (perhaps foreshadowed in *Ariadne*) is conversation comedy on the tragic stage, in the theater of naked truth, a theater based on the irreconcilability of intellectual and social life and on the impossibility of thinking or speaking the truth or supporting truth over time, this being the tragic aspect of the need for Hans Karl to decide on the instant, with no thought or intention. And what is a Viennese conversation comedy doing in this theater? Has the theater of naked truth now found a way to assert itself as a theater, rather than plunge into the desperate circle of self-discrediting that characterizes Hofmannsthal's tragedies?

The second point concerns dramatic conventions more generally. How can a theater audience be expected to believe in the figure of

Hans Karl as it emerges from the argument of this and the preceding chapter? Can anyone live, in reality, the way we must imagine Hans Karl as living, in a literally infinite self-love that can express itself, paradoxically, only in modesty and confused self-uncertainty? Is he not too much an ideal type, a schematically defined limiting case, not a believable individual? At this point I will only suggest an answer to this question, but an answer that will be seen to accord in general with the intertwining of philosophical and technical questions in Hofmannsthal. Hans Karl, I claim, represents the introduction, into the plot fiction, of the dramatic "character" as such, seen from a technical point of view. Hans Karl is never more than a rôle, or a collection of rôles, a series of tasks for an actor who happens to be himself. He comes into existence *only* in the medium of conversation (i.e. dialogue); and just as the dramatic character in general does not take shape for an audience except by what he wants, so it can be said of Hans Karl that "desiring is his nature," with emphasis now on the last word. He is believable for an audience because he is *the* human individual as seen from precisely the conventional point of view of a dramatic audience. He represents, as it were, a glimpse behind the scenes, a subtler version of the ironic techniques of *Ariadne*. I will develop this point in the next chapter.

6

The above argument is based on a single perception concerning the plot of *Der Schwierige*, that Hans Karl's return to the party is fully motivated on the level of conscious intent. If this were not so, the play's central theme of *Zufall/Notwendigkeit* would lack all conviction, since the crucial event in the action, precisely by not being motivated, would become the work of *nothing but* an inner "necessity" (or "will"), with no element of chance, no incongruity between intent and result, no possibility of distinguishing necessity from "reality." Hans Karl and Helene would be merely puppets under the control of irresistible forces (his deeper will, her desperate love), and there would be no interaction between inner formative power and the absurd accidentalness of existence. Even philosophically speaking – for example, in the "Reiselied" – the element of chance or "Tyche," our situation vis-à-vis a dangerous or unaccountable nature, is indissolubly coupled with the element of fate or truth in our experience of the world, in the same way that forgetting and remembering, or "Verwandlung" and "Beharren"

(P3 138), are coupled in the existence of the self. Even considered as a drama of ideas, therefore, *Der Schwierige* depends for its meaning on our perception of the quality of accident in its plot.

But plot in *Der Schwierige* is not the same thing as in *Abenteurer* where it is an ethically prescriptive symbol, or in *Elektra* where it is a diagram of despair, or in *Das gerettete Venedig* where it is a counterweight to the naked truth. With the turn toward comedy in 1907, a new set of conditions arises; and, at least on the non-musical stage, it is not until the *submerged* plot of *Der Schwierige* that these new conditions are mastered adequately.[14] This plot is both cohesive, with no gaps in conscious motivation, and philosophically significant (Hans Karl's real reason for returning represents factuality as such); but its significance arises largely from omissions (the missed meetings) and from a crucial piece of motivation that is never mentioned. Hofmannsthal is referring in part to these features of plot structure when he contrasts his own comic technique with the French manner,

> which in every piece of dialogue strives for the *pointe*, the clear result, the summation, whereas I, from turn to turn, repeatedly conceal the summation by a sophisticated indirectness. (H/PZ, p. 182)

Or we are reminded again of the idea of "discreet presentation" (H/LvA, p. 253) as a correlative to discretion as a theme.

And the technique of submerged plot has the effect of bringing more clearly into focus, as bearing the play's meaning, language and character as such. The plot is worked out in detail and so creates an underlying sense of mimetic cohesion; but at the same time neither the personages nor their speeches give the impression of merely *belonging* to the plot. Hofmannsthal writes of *Der Schwierige* to Wildgans:

> You will find that, as in "Cristina," the truly spiritual, the personal-metaphysical, what you like to call "the confessional," is hidden under an irony of figuration [Gestaltung], or here even under a redoubled irony of figuration in a social, formed element. But still, this individual-metaphysical kernel is very strong, and I sometimes worried that it would break out of its shell.[15]

What Hofmannsthal calls the "metaphysical" is expressed in the play mainly as the absolute content of characters' speeches (that is, content not relativized as belonging to a particular situation or feeling), especially Hans Karl's speeches on chance and necessity; and it is the submergence of the plot that allows the absolute

content to capture our attention as strongly as it does – perhaps, Hofmannsthal worries, even too strongly.

It follows, moreover, that the technique of submerged plot also tends toward *a synthesis of the lyrical with the mimetic mode*, thus a solution to one of the main problems in Hofmannsthal's development. This technique is a significant advance in the direction of the mimetic, not only beyond the plotlessness of the early lyrical plays, but even beyond the symbolic plots of *Theater in Versen* and the intellectual tragedies; for the symbolic plot, to the extent that we recognize it as symbol, forfeits its quality as an imitation of reality. But the submerged plot, by being submerged, also allows the surface of the drama, its immediate communicativeness, to be shaped exclusively by the metaphysical meaning, which is characteristic of the lyrical mode. We tend to read (or hear) speeches in *Der Schwierige* in the same way we do speeches in, say, *Der Tor und der Tod*, as if they were poems, attentive mainly to their logical and philosophical and metaphorical structure, rather than to their function in a fictional chain of events. (A glance at the secondary literature, I think, abundantly corroborates this observation.) And the presence of the metaphysical on the surface – "Die Tiefe muß man verstecken. Wo? An der Oberfläche" (A 47) – has the effect, in turn, of calling our attention to the metaphysical function of the plot itself, that function which the plot carries out *not* as a symbol, but precisely by virtue of its nonsymbolic, strictly mimetic cohesion, its function as the threatening abyss of reality above which human existence must be supported by discretion and true self-esteem. The submerged plot, properly handled, thus renders the drama at once *wholly* lyrical and *wholly* mimetic in mode.

Hofmannsthal is aware of the significance of this synthesis, and attempts a tragic variation of the submerged plot in the 1925 version of *Der Turm*. Julian has intended from the start to use Sigismund as a means of attaining power, and his opportunity apparently arrives with the summons from Basilius. But if a reconciliation between father and son were effected, Sigismund's first task would be to eliminate Julian. Therefore the fiasco at court is actually to Julian's advantage, and also shows him the usefulness to himself of that chaotic state of the realm which had forced Basilius to attempt to provide himself with an heir. To exploit this situation, however, Julian must employ a rabble-rousing lieutenant, Olivier, which proves his downfall; and Olivier in turn, though he successfully exploits the material dissatisfaction and political rebelliousness of the populace, has no means of dealing with a third

quality, their desperate religious fanaticism, their longing for a legitimate priest-king, which rescues Sigismund. At this point the earlier episode at court again operates in the plot, since but for that episode the nobility, represented by Graf Adam, would have no way of knowing about Sigismund's claim to legitimacy; and without recognition from at least part of the fragmented nobility, the young man borne aloft on the shoulders of peasants and laborers could never find himself at the head of an organized army, in a position to deal with foreign governments. Sigismund is legitimate and recognized, which causes Olivier's downfall, whereupon, in a final twist, the same mystical fanaticism that had earlier rescued him now reappears in the person of the gypsy and destroys him.

As in *Der Schwierige*, all this complex and logically tight-knit machinery is kept in the background, most of it never becoming explicit in dialogue. And as in *Der Schwierige*, the gulf between the submerged plot and the metaphysically charged linguistic surface of the play is crucial. For whereas Hans Karl and Helene contrive to keep the two levels separate, and suppress reality in favor of necessity, Sigismund tries to bridge the gulf by using the gypsy for military and political intelligence. The level of plot and that of mystical philosophy are thus confounded, and the result is the tragic impossibility of that fruitful social tension which had characterized the comic theater of *Der Schwierige*. Precisely the utopian vision at the end, the appearance of the child-king, *is* the confounding of necessity with reality, our acknowledgment that we, the audience, as the envisioners of that vision, are no more able than Sigismund to insist strictly upon necessity, that precisely the triumph of the necessary, of the divine in us, of the artistic mastery of experience, brings with it – by a developed form of the paradox of the soul – an irresistible, Christ-like compassion for the real, which inevitably re-establishes the tragic quality of our existence.

12

SOCIETY AS DRAMA

That the interpretation of *Der Schwierige* turns out here to be composed of a number of different arguments, on different levels and with different immediate objects, is a natural consequence of the play's genesis. For *Der Schwierige* is Hofmannsthal's attempt to deal at one stroke with practically all of the problem-complexes discussed so far: the problem of the lyrical or magical, how to incorporate into language the knowledge of a truth that becomes true only by being kept silent; the problem of the mimetic–social, how to throw open an artistic structure to the accident of actual society without making non-structure of it; the problem of a bridge between the lyrical and the mimetic, or between intellectual and social existence; and the problem of problems, of consciousness, of language as such, the problem of the inevitable tendency of an ironic achievement, once recognized, to lose the quality of irony and hence also that of achievement. *Der Schwierige*, like all of Hofmannsthal's later works, is an attempt to close the lid on chaos, and so contains not only the danger of futility but even a secret desire for futility. If the task can be accomplished, then perhaps it was not worth undertaking to begin with. Or perhaps, in a sense, the lid is closed after all; but trapped within remains only the evil of Hope.

I

At the beginning of *Der Schwierige*, Lukas tells the new servant Vinzenz that Hans Karl's compulsive locking and unlocking of drawers is the sign of a very bad mood (L2 148); and this point is soon verified, when Crescence suggests to Hans Karl that his real reason for declining Altenwyl's invitation is a wish to avoid Helene (L2 155). We then see Hans Karl's mood go from bad to worse, when Crescence assures him that Helene will marry Neuhoff (L2 156), and become worse still when she maintains that Helene will

do so in a kind of perverse defiance (L2 157). Lukas' perception thus turns out to be not only accurate, but deeply revealing; and the significance of this recognition, at the beginning of the play, is that it prepares us to understand Hans Karl's character largely by way of *what others say about him.*

I have argued that within the world of the fiction, Hans Karl could not exist apart from his particular social milieu, in the same way that a dramatic character does not exist apart from the web of poetic relations (including judgments of him spoken by other characters) that makes up his drama. This point comes home to us strongly when we ask ourselves – as the play's title indicates we must – what we *know* about Hans Karl as a character. With the aid of basic dramatic conventions we can deduce from what we see of him that he is kind, tolerant, ironic, and reasonably self-possessed. But his most significant quality, the conversational or social talent that others prize in him, is, at the very least, difficult to discern in the Act II conversations with Antoinette and Helene. In both cases he talks his way more deeply into his subject than necessary – thus fulfilling his earlier self-reproach, "or it happens that I say straight out what I think" (L2 154) – and loses sight of his immediate goal. His promise to see Antoinette regularly, to help her with her repaired marriage, is almost as ill-considered, psychologically, as his explanation of his love to Helene in the very process of breaking off with her – which in turn repeats the tactlessness of his earlier reminding her, by insisting on Furlani's nonchalant balancing skill, of his own conduct of their long, awkward relation (L2 221). There is thus definite substance in the conclusion he draws at the end of the Act II conversation with Helene: "I just don't belong among people" (L2 266).

We do not receive directly from the stage action any reason for Hans Karl's "extraordinary repute in the best society" (L2 231). We never get a chance to observe what Crescence calls "the great 'air,' the 'distance' you maintain with everyone" (L2 152) – not even in the conversation with Neuhoff, which is little more than a series of embarrassed silences and certainly does not show Hans Karl's "bonhomie" (L2 152, 188). Moreover, whereas three ladies presumably typical of this Viennese society appear, Edine, Nanni and Huberta, who do not figure much in the action, there is no corresponding group of typical Viennese gentlemen with whom we might compare Hans Karl. Whenever we encounter him, it is, relatively speaking, in "intimate" situations (L2 192). We never see him merely carrying out the "empty pretence of sociable obli-

gations" (P3 179) with the elegance that others admire in him; we never see him, as Neuhoff puts it, "balancing from head to foot in the self-assurance of limitless triviality – surrounded by women and girls" (L2 230).

The idea of "triviality," however, draws our attention to a technical aspect of these considerations; for the principle of artistic selection – or of intentionality, in either the text or the whole proceeding – implies that everything actually shown in the drama has significance, so that the strictly trivial is excluded, concealed from us *by our situation as a dramatic audience.* We recall the Chandos letter where what must appear *to us* as mystical experience – since, as readers, we are operating on the level of intellect – is perhaps in truth the entirely trivial substance of life for the non-intellectual. The audience are not meant to discount the indirect characterization of Hans Karl. In fact the corroboration of Lukas' statements, at the outset, is a signal, a confirmation in advance of such indirect characterization. What people say of Hans Karl must be understood as part of what Hans Karl *is*, even by way of Neuhoff, who, though himself insincere, has evidently taken his cue from others (probably Helene) when he speaks to Hans Karl of "men of your type, from whom society receives its real stamp ... substance without pretension, distinction softened by an infinite grace" (L2 194). These qualities by their nature *cannot be shown* to an audience, any more than Vittoria's singing can be heard. But they are still qualities which – as it were for the sake of argument – we are meant to acknowledge as belonging to Hans Karl.

Hans Karl is thus, so to speak, *by hypothesis* a very paradigm of genteel social existence; and it therefore strikes us as a paradox, especially in view of the relation of *Der Schwierige* to Chandos, that his actual speeches show a strong intellectual tendency. Obviously his is not an intellectual existence in the sense of a life wholly committed to the creation and conscious grasp of a valid order in things; in the play's very first words, Lukas shows us his "so-called" study or "work room" (L2 147). But on the other hand, Hans Karl in conversation does have the tendency "to introduce a bizarre notion: that of higher necessity" (L2 185); he is repeatedly gripped by the idea of an eternal truth behind the general confusion of things, the idea,

> that nothing new ever happens in the world ... That everything has already long existed, somewhere, and only suddenly becomes visible. Do you know, just as when in autumn the water used to be drained from the pond at Hohenbühl, and suddenly the carp and the tails of the stone tritons

were there, things that one had hardly seen earlier? A burlesque idea, isn't it! (L2 211)

It is perhaps characteristic of social existence that he immediately dismisses these ideas, as he has also dismissed the revealed truth about himself and Helene; but the importance of such thinking in his life, the importance of truth, can also be measured by his aversion to just those purely sociable situations in which he (by hypothesis) excels: "But the thing itself [a soirée] is such a horror for me . . . the whole thing is such an impossible tangle of misunderstandings" (L2 153–4).

In the Chandos letter it can be argued that the intellectual quality of the language is itself a social initiative, a response to the quality of mind represented by Bacon – or, foreseeably, by the text's actual reader. But in Hans Karl, the combination of the intellectual and the social is strictly a paradox, corresponding to the paradox of discretion and communication in the Act III conversation (that true contact can be achieved only by holding back) as well as to the paradox of freedom and bondage. Hans Karl insists on his freedom; but his freedom expresses itself, like Furlani's, in a submission to other people's intentions, and ends by binding itself in marriage. I maintain that the elaboration of this set of paradoxes or syntheses, including the synthesis of the lyrical and mimetic modes, is the main business of the play.

2

The paradox in the figure of a perfect social man whose thoughts repeatedly turn toward an intellectual vision of truth, and who regards social intercourse as "eine horreur," is resolvable up to a point by the understanding that intellect represents only one of a pair of fundamental dangers to social existence. Intellectual activity relativizes all particular *forms*, including the forms that must be maintained in society. Existence appears as "one great unity" to Chandos the intellectual poet, because the forms of all things appear to be significantly related in a single huge pattern that corresponds to the conceptual pattern of the verbal medium in which he attempts to master them. And the crisis, when form dissolves and leaves only the naked otherness of things, is inevitable in a fully committed intellectual existence. For form is important to the intellect only as a tool, a means to mastery, whence it follows that no particular form can be accepted as *binding*

in the sense that the forms of a society to which one truly belongs must be binding. Intellect, by assuming a manipulative distance relative to all particular forms, eventually finds itself at a distance relative to form as such, and the intellectual discovers that his own existence has consequently become a frighteningly unmanageable chaos. Hence the association of intellectual pretensions with personal insecurity in Neuhoff and Professor Brücke; hence our understanding that the enjoyable but unjustifiable manners and forms of the society depicted in *Der Schwierige* cannot long survive in a "real world" built of "intellectual crises."

But the other danger, of which Hofmannsthal is just as keenly aware, is suggested in the *Ariadne* letter, "permanence is rigidity and death" (W24 205; P3 138), and in a note on the "danger that the ego forget how to love, or in aesthetic terms, that form become rigid . . . I abandoned every form before it stiffened" (A 240–1). All form, including social form, tends to petrify and die if it is *merely* accepted. "Die Formen beleben und töten" (A 47). In order for form to operate as a vital force, the individual must maintain his critical perspective; the social person is precisely not the person who blindly accepts social forms, for a society of such people would be dead, a form with no content. The individual must receive his particular social form as binding upon himself, and must fit into it smoothly, but only by means of a constant inner struggle against his own critical tendency. As Hans Karl says of Furlani, "Er ist förmlich schön vor lauter Nonchalance – aber natürlich gehört zu dieser Nonchalance genau das Doppelte [sc. 'an Geist,' (cf. L2 221)] wie zu den andern ihrer Anspannung" (L2 222); true nonchalance requires twice as much intellectual capacity as tense concentration. There is thus no contradiction between a view of *Der Schwierige* as representing the essence of the social and Hofmannsthal's note on the play, "that all the figures are made of criticism: Misanthrope – criticism as motor of the action."[1] And the same paradox applies to language: "True love of language is impossible without the denial of language" (A 71). A truly verbal individual, for whom language is the living shape of existence, must also be critical of language to the point of denying it.

The paradox in the figure of Hans Karl is thus a paradox in the nature of the social itself. In the *Buch der Freunde* we read, "Wer das Gesellschaftliche anders als symbolisch nimmt, geht fehl" (A 21). The social must be "taken" symbolically; and we can understand the word "symbolisch" here by going back to "Das Gespräch über Gedichte," to the idea that our own self must be

sought "out there," or to the *Buch der Freunde* itself: "If I think of myself and any second thing in addition – even a map of Greece – I see into myself as through a window" (A 41). The proper "symbolic" use of the social is the opening of an intellectual window into the self, which in turn reminds us that Hans Karl's closest approach to mere "Konversation," his idlest or most trivially "social" speeches, are his remarks on his mirror image Furlani. But on the other hand, the individual cannot be wholly self-preoccupied, for then the social is simply not there to be "taken," symbolically or otherwise; the symbolic arises only by contact with something that is truly "a second thing." The social thus requires both a relaxed openness to externals and a certain brooding inwardness, which duality corresponds to the synthesis of lyrical and mimetic modes discussed above.

This paradox or internal tension in the social is parallel to the polarity Hofmannsthal develops in the *Ariadne* letter, between "metamorphosis" as the "life of life" and the requirement of "permanence" or "loyalty," between "forgetting" and "not-forgetting" (W24 205; P3 138). The very existence of the social is "permanence," the maintenance of a set of accepted forms; but in order not to petrify, these forms must be infused with life, with the constant possibility of metamorphosis, which means they must be practiced with critical detachment. A complication arises when we relate this polarity to the polarity of remembering and forgetting in the life of the individual. For it is precisely the individual's capacity for metamorphosis or self-forgetting, his flexibility, "with an easy wrist" (L2 274), that enables him to fit smoothly into established social forms and so makes possible those forms' permanence; Hans Karl has "his wrist always relaxed, ready to let go" (L2 181), with respect not only to the ladies but also to his visions of eternal truth, which if clung to will deprive mere social form of its binding validity. And conversely, it is the individual's insistence on permanence, on the knowledge and realization of his true self, hence his critical distance from the social, that introduces into the social a tendency toward metamorphosis, or even dissolution, which keeps the social from petrifying as *empty* form.

The individual and the social are thus dialectically opposed, the mutability of each being the integrity or permanence of the other, but in such a way that there is a point of pure paradox or balance (Hans Karl) at which they nevertheless achieve harmony. And again, a corresponding argument may be made with respect to language:

Das Individuum ist unaussprechlich. Was sich ausspricht, geht schon ins Allgemeine über, ist nicht mehr im strengen Sinne individuell. Sprache und Individuum heben sich gegenseitig auf.[2] (A 194)

The individual is inexpressible. What expresses itself already passes into the general, is no longer strictly individual. Language and the individual suspend each other.

But there is a point of balance, achievable by discretion,[3] a point somehow between the love and the denial of language, at which individuals can still in a sense linguistically reach each other while remaining individuals, like those two insoluble, ineffable problems who decide to get married in the second conversation between Hans Karl and Helene.

3

The idea of the social as existing in constant tension between the dangers of fragmentation and petrifaction enables us to say more about the configuration of characters in *Der Schwierige*. We have discussed the progression: Hans Karl–Stani–Neuhoff–Professor Brücke; but this is only half the picture. The whole scale, moving from the extreme of petrifaction to that of fragmentation, is given by: Vinzenz–Neugebauer–Hans Karl–Neuhoff–Professor Brücke. Whereas Neuhoff and the professor represent intellect, the force that tends to break down social form, Vinzenz and Neugebauer are the two characters whose thinking is governed by an entirely rigid idea of society, Neugebauer in his insistence on the absence of communication between classes, Vinzenz in supposing that by knowing one or two things about Hans Karl's circumstances, he knows the man completely.

This scale, from Vinzenz to the professor, is characterized not only by progression but also by symmetry about its center. Vinzenz and the professor have in common that they can think of Hans Karl only as he might be useful for their own ends; his relation to these two "impossible" men is given almost exactly in the aphorism: "Without self-love no life is possible, and not the most innocuous decision, nothing but despair and rigidity" (A 17). Despair characterizes the professor, who for all his pompousness is in desperate need of support for his personality; rigidity is the condition of the utterly insensitive Vinzenz. But as opposites to Hans Karl's self-love, these two qualities go together; the extremes of the scale in a sense meet.

The complementary relation between Neugebauer and Neuhoff,

which is suggested by their names, is rather deeper.[4] Neugebauer is a theorist of duty and moral constraint ("mit welchem bitteren, sittlichen Ernst das Leben in unsern glanzlosen Sphären behaftet ist" [L2 174]); even though his relation to his new fiancée is evidently more sincere than that to his old one had been, his scruples will not allow him to regard his own happiness as anything but a case of exchanging "difficult tasks for still more difficult ones." Neuhoff is exactly the opposite, the theorist of an absolute will that supposedly cannot but prevail "in a will-less world" (L2 253).[5] He and Neugebauer between them thus enact the paradox of freedom and submission that is embodied in Hans Karl; hence the symmetrical positions of the three on the scale. Neugebauer, in Hans Karl's place, would feel duty-bound to carry out an even firmer renunciation of Helene; Neuhoff, in Hans Karl's place, would obviously cite the vision in the trench as proof positive of his mystical "right" (L2 253–4) over Helene, an approach she would have to reject. Hans Karl, however, is neither Neugebauer nor Neuhoff, but something in between; he does renounce Helene in Act II, but not without indicating the depth of his attachment to her, and he does recount the vision in the trench, but with no ulterior motive. It is precisely his "Wiegel-Wagel" (L2 152, 308), "shilly-shallying," his indeterminate hovering between the self-effacing position of a Neugebauer and the self-assertive position of a Neuhoff, that makes him Hans Karl, and makes possible his union with Helene.

But we can go still further by remarking that the center of the scale, the point of equilibrium or paradox at which the individual and the social are in harmony, is occupied by Helene as well as by Hans Karl. Good manners, which Hofmannsthal understands as "attentiveness" and "not obtruding oneself" (A 29), are by nature the acceptance of external constraint, but are used by Helene precisely in order to maintain her inner freedom: "My manners are only a kind of nervous reaction to keep people off my neck" (L2 223). She is thus characterized by the same paradox as Hans Karl; and an inviolable self-love, which appears especially in the conversation with Neuhoff, is also part of her nature. Helene and Hans Karl together occupy the center of the scale; but Helene tends in the direction of manners or constraint, while Hans Karl's leaning is toward intellect or freedom, and the absolute center is defined between them, not by either alone. Hence the dynamics of the Act III conversation, in which Helene's is definitely the more assertive rôle and Hans Karl's the more constrained. In the very act of talking about Hans Karl's "will," which she knows is a fiction,

Helene is in fact carrying out her own will, and Hans Karl's main contribution to the proceeding is to allow himself to be restrained by tact from clearing up the misunderstanding about his reason for returning. Perhaps Helene has learned something (beyond just the concept of "will") from the assertive Neuhoff, and perhaps Neugebauer's "lecture" (L2 175) has not been entirely lost on Hans Karl. At any rate, Helene moves in the direction of self-assertion, Hans Karl allows himself to be moved in the direction of constraint, and the two meet and are joined at the absolute, mysterious, geometrical center of the play's scale of character-types.

Once this center is defined, moreover, it becomes plain that practically all of the play's characters are located symmetrically in relation to it. We have seen that Stani occupies a position between Hans Karl and Neuhoff; and Stani's opposite number, the other character who attempts to mold his existence to Hans Karl's, but in a self-effacing way, by contrast with Stani's self-assertive imitation, is the servant Lukas. Crescence and Altenwyl, whose embrace closes the play, are also a complementary pair, both older and apparently widowed, but opposites on the scale of remembering and forgetting: Crescence mobile and adaptable, prey to ever-changing circumstances but never off balance, Altenwyl sluggish and wrapped up in the past. And finally, the inept couple, Adolf and Antoinette Hechingen, are parallel to Hans Karl and Helene but unable to find their way to a similar union at the center. Both the Hechingens are confused, but their confusions are symmetrical. Antoinette, basically gregarious and mercurial, is now desperately trying to hold fast an ideal, "the one really beautiful thing in my life" (L2 241), while her husband, "the born married-man" (L2 186), basically an advocate of permanence, is desperately struggling for a free and easy mode of existence. These relations can be schematized as shown in the diagram:

Constraint	Will
Established form	Self-conscious intellect
Rigidity	Mutability

Helene	Hans Karl
Lukas	Stani
Altenwyl	Crescence
Hechingen	Antoinette
Neugebauer	Neuhoff
Vinzenz	Professor Brücke

Thus, with the exception of Antoinette's retinue – Huberta, Nanni, Edine and the maid Agathe – *all* of the play's characters can be paired off relative to that center of paradoxical balance where the individual and the social become one and each becomes truly itself. This mysterious center, along with the oppositions that define it, is what the play is really about, in an almost spatial sense as well as in the normal figurative sense.

4

My argument does not require that the above scheme be accepted in its entirety as representing the play's intention. That the pairs Neugebauer/Neuhoff, Adolf/Antoinette and Altenwyl/Crescence are meant to be complementary in a manner mirroring the complementarity of Helene and Hans Karl, I think is obvious. The other two pairs are perhaps only induced to develop as pairs by the work's quasi-geometric field of focus. In any case, I maintain that Alewyn's notion of "configuration" does apply here.

And, up to a point, it can be argued that the effect of the symmetrical configuration as such is to present the social as a primary and the individual as a secondary reality. Our grasp of the symmetry enables us to see through the idiosyncrasies of each personage to the type of geometrical value beneath; as in the tragedies, the trappings of individuality are stripped away to reveal pure function, except that in *Der Schwierige* this process is focussed not on a central individual, but on a pattern of individuals arranged about the central idea of the social, which is poised precariously between the dangers of petrifaction and fragmentation. Or this supersedure of the individual may be regarded as a process of personality-multiplication; all the pairs, from Vinzenz/Brücke to Helene/Hans Karl, are variations on the Maria/Mariquita theme. Perhaps the mimetic cohesion of *Der Schwierige*, its continuity of dialogue and plot, renders the underlying configuration less obvious (less mathematical, less Kleistian?) than in *Ariadne*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Andreas* or *Lucidor/Arabella*; perhaps this covering up of the inner structure, as we gradually see through it, gives the impression not of an imposition but of a revelation of the central idea, as if the water were being let out of the pond at Schloß Hohenbühl. But still, geometric form operates to resist the idea of independent individuality.

It is especially important to understand that even the *distance*

separating each character from the play's center is not so much an individual as a social necessity. Even if it were possible for an individual to achieve perfection as a social being, a perfect combination of activity with passivity, memory with forgetfulness, formative intellect with outward attentiveness, still, an actual society composed of such individuals is unthinkable. If the perfect social being existed, then the social would be achieved in him but could not be *realized as society*, for the quality of relative otherness, without which it is no trick to be "sensitive to human quality," would be missing. Even Hans Karl and Helene, in the paradoxical quality of their natures that causes Crescence to see them as "so complicated" (L2 155), constitute only an approach to the perfection of social being (which is why there are two of them), not an actual arrival there – or at least not until they find each other and "become as *one* person" (L2 265). Again, the social cannot be realized as a society except by way of individuals placed eccentrically relative to its ideal culmination.

The paradox of the soul, that our true divine unity can be realized only in the inner plurality and conflict of self-conscious existence, is thus exactly paralleled by a paradox of the social. And if we ask what particular feature of society corresponds to the dissonant internal separation by which the individual self is realized, the answer is clear, and is the main theme of *Der Schwierige*: misunderstanding. What the internal confusion of self-consciousness is for the individual self, the external confusion of misunderstandings is for society, the dissonance or imperfection without which an ideal unity would not be able to manifest itself. The plot of the comedy is an allegory of this situation, for what makes possible the union of Hans Karl and Helene, thus at least the momentary vision of an actual arrival at the play's center, is not a clearing up of misunderstandings, but precisely the discreet avoidance of such a clearing up. In fact, if we are willing to adopt the point of view suggested for us by the play's geometrical structure, then misunderstanding is the process that *generates* the individual. The question of whether it is our individuality that involves us in misunderstanding, or a prior process of misunderstanding that creates our individuality, is only a question of perspective. The social as such can be thought of as generating individuals by a process of misunderstanding in the medium of language, just as the divine unity of man, by a process of self-conscious internal division, generates the "states" of *Das Kleine Welttheater*.

I say that we *can* think of the social in this way, and if we do, we

are reminded of Hans Karl's remark on "how accidental we all are," since chance and misunderstanding are practically identical as experiences. Or we think of the note, "Tyche = the world that would separate the individual from itself in order to bring him to itself." The separation of the individual from the world as a whole is the very definition or genesis of individuality; and what the note suggests, therefore, is the idea of chance as the process by which "world" generates distinct individualities in order to provide itself with extension, which parallels exactly the idea of needful eccentricity in the social. We *can* think in this way, but it is not yet clear how the opposed perspective, the reader's or spectator's inescapable feeling of his own individuality, is meant to be overcome.

5

The structure of *Der Schwierige* suggests that the social (and the verbal) are realities somehow prior to that of the individual. Even the extreme characters, Vinzenz and the professor, still receive their individuality as a relation to the social, as part of the definition and articulation of the idea that occupies the play's center. But on the other hand, the social can be realized *only* by way of eccentric individuals (geometrically speaking), which means that we carry out our social function precisely by experiencing our individuality. Hence a problem: how can we achieve a specific experience of the social, as distinct from our experience of our particular selves? How do we know there is such a thing as society in the first place?

It is essentially this question that Hofmannsthal raises in the letter to Wildgans, when he expatiates on the "metaphysical kernel" of *Der Schwierige:*

> The problem that has often tormented and worried me (already in *Der Tor und der Tod*, most strongly in the Chandos letter, which you perhaps know) – how does the isolated individual get to the point of attaching himself by language to society, of being in fact, will he or no, irretrievably attached to it [rettungslos verknüpft]? – and further: how can the speaker then act – since speaking is already knowing, thus the suspension of action – . (H/AW, p. 31)

Within the experience of the individual considered as a self-contained system, speaking anticipates and so prevents action.[6] Therefore, since we do act and live anyway, there must be a component of our experience that is not strictly individual; we must

be inescapably attached to society not only by external need, but in experience, in the very process of speaking and knowing. Again, therefore: what is our specific experience of the social?

The mention of Chandos and *Der Tor und der Tod* suggests an answer to part of this question. We achieve contact with "human life" by learning, as Claudio does, to use language as pure action; we achieve social existence by employing intellectual language as a social device, as Chandos does. Contact with the social is achieved by a discretion or irony in language, our using of language while somehow not taking it seriously. But the question of our *experience* of the social asks how we arrive, to begin with, at a self-perspective that enables us to conceive and apply that needful irony; and in order to deal with this question we first need a clearer idea of the metaphysics of *Der Schwierige*, especially as it appears in the conversation between the two intellectuals, Neuhoff and the professor, in II, ii.

The idea of nothingness or non-existence crops up with significant frequency in this scene, comically in Edine's question, "What do you think nirvana is like?" (L2 228), ominously in Neuhoff's remarks on the nullity of Viennese society, and strikingly in Neuhoff's judgment of Hans Karl as "absolutes, anmaßendes Nichts" (L2 230), "absolute, presumptuous Nothing." This last formulation may not be accurate in the way Neuhoff means it, but it does remind us strongly of the implied definition of humanity in Hofmannsthal's earlier works. In the "Reiselied," for example, man is the happening of a kind of presumptuousness (*Anmaßung*) in the midst of primal nothingness, a presumptuousness that is manifest in the act of speaking the word "uns"; it is only *after* this arbitrary assertion of man's generic or eternal being, only as a result of it, that the endangered, mortal individual comes into existence. The individual, that is, is a derivative reality; the idea or experience of individuality cannot arise except in relation to a larger generic or communal idea – one must be an individual example of *something*. If we take Hans Karl's maxim, "Everything that happens is the work of chance," in its full literal sense, then it also says what Death tells Claudio, that existence is basically a "chaos of dead things," a nothingness in which *human* being must assert "relation" in order that individual being make sense.

But the generic or universally communal nature of humanity from which the experience of individuality is derived, humanity as the happening of articulated order in the world, is not available in

experience except in the form of pre-existence, the experience of oneself as god, which cannot be maintained in our actual condition of "existence" or duration in time. The insufficiency of *Der Tor und der Tod* is that its theatrical strategy, while awakening the audience's sense of participation in a ritual, attempts to realize the ritual as a direct participation in the ideal or universal community of man, which is impossible. Hence Hofmannsthal's insistence now on the idea of the social; and hence the importance of the question of our *experience* of the social. We are always surrounded by other individuals, we always exist in some sort of community; perhaps it is possible to take our experience of the real, limited community as a *symbol* of mankind's universal community. "The social can and must be taken only allegorically . . . as a great mythology" (A 27). The individual, by way of language, is "rettungslos verknüpft" with society; for society is the only symbolic vehicle by which he can make contact in experience with the true metaphysical situation his use of language places him in. By speaking, we constantly reaffirm the act of universal ordering on which our existence is based (we pass into the "general") and so attach ourselves irretrievably to the social as our *only* means of symbolic contact with the universal; the actual "we" of society, the only "we" that is available in our experience for use as a symbol, must represent the original "we" as spoken in the "Reiselied."

In terms of the metaphysics on which this symbolic relation is based, moreover, human being is the *arbitrary* assertion of order or form in the face of nothingness; hence the significance of the intellectual unjustifiability of social forms. Precisely the arbitrary or (unkindly expressed) "trivial" quality of social forms, the quality of society as a mere human institution from which individuals can be excluded, thus supports its symbolic value.

We can now understand more completely the idea of society as poised between the dangers of petrifaction and fragmentation. Our true relation to the articulated order of things is one of unceasing creation, "Die unaufhörliche Creation" (W30 99; E 216), which means that when social forms are passively accepted to the extent that they petrify, society as a symbol is falsified. But on the other hand, the order of the world is binding upon us; it consists in the creation of death, the irrevocable commitment of divine humanity to mortal existence. Therefore the forms of a truly symbolic society must also be received as binding, despite their evident arbitrariness and in a manner that still contrives to avoid an excess of passivity in the gesture of acceptance. Hence, again, the idea that the social is

"attained" by a discreet or ironic use of intellectual language. For language as such is in truth supremely active, the token, indeed the actual persistence, of the primordial creative act on which our being is founded. By using language, whether or not we acknowledge it, we transcend our individuality, seek contact with the universal order that is our true being, and so cannot but see through the triviality of social forms. But by nevertheless restraining ourselves within a kind of intellectually applied discretion – "The rules of propriety, rightly understood, are also a guide in intellectual matters" (A 26) – by taking our language seriously, but always with a light hand, always ready to dismiss its "bizarre" consequences, we also admit the unstatability of the truth, hence the binding validity of our imperfect communicative situation, and so make possible the realization of society as a symbol.

And yet, the definition of social existence as an intellectual existence that somehow does not take itself too seriously, is still incomplete, for it does not yet fully distinguish between the two types of existence; it does not yet recognize that only a *particular* and *established* society can become an adequate symbol of the truth. Even an individual in the position of Electra or Oedipus could conceivably avoid taking the intellectual too seriously, and so avoid fate; even these figures, like Jaffier, have a "fate that can be let slip" (A 225), a fate that must be made to take on the character of fate by uncompromising intellectual endeavor. But neither Electra nor Oedipus could ever attain *social* existence, because neither of them has a real society, neither belongs in a "social element" that is *already* "formed." Once the individual (like Electra or Oedipus) defines himself by the experience of a world "out of joint" – and relative to absolute truth, every particular communal order, every society, is out of joint – then strict loyalty to his nature as a human being requires that he commit himself to intellectual existence and its tragedy.[7] He may still "let slip" his fate, but in doing so he merely violates his nature, like Jaffier, and renders his existence meaningless. The converse of this proposition now also applies. The individual, like Neuhoff or the professor, who seeks fulfilment in an established society but insists nonetheless on intellectual self-definition, merely makes himself ridiculous. Neuhoff is Jaffier turned inside out. True intellectual heroism in an established society is as impossible as true social existence in the absence of such a society. The intellectual hero within society turns out to be merely a braggart or a parasite, for he

does not really confront himself with the limitless primal disorder in which intellectual tragedy arises.

And the idea of established society brings us back to the question of the priority of the social relative to the individual. For the whole point of the verbal discretion or irony by which we attain the social is that we suppress all direct expression of the metaphysical truth manifest in our conscious quasi-divinity, and accept (or indeed, insist upon) the social as prior. Otherwise society does not function as a symbol, since what it symbolizes, our universal being, *is* prior to our individual existence, as the "uns" of the "Reiselied" is prior to the ego. The question of priority between society and the ego is not abstractly decidable. But in order to exist as the symbol it in truth is, society *must* be prior; and from the point of view of an authentic social existence, it follows simply that the social *is* prior to the individual, that the individual is "accidental," nothing but a product of the necessary dissonant force of misunderstanding in society. Hence the need for an established society as the environment for social existence; we must *experience* the social as prior to the individual, and we cannot reasonably do so unless the forms of our society have a history beyond the limits of our individual life. Electra cannot exist socially even after the execution of justice, because the reconstitution of stable social order coincides exactly with her own intellectual fulfilment, and the renewed society has not, for her, the character of prior establishment.

The relation between self-love and the attainment of the social is now also developed beyond the psychological level. For it follows that in an established society, the individual's self-love, in the sense of his metaphysical love for the divine power or will in his nature, can be expressed only by his rendering the social as perfect a symbol of divine humanity as possible, only by his approaching as closely as possible that mysterious *coincidentia oppositorum*, of mobility and rigidity, of critical perception and unquestioning acceptance, at which the individual and the social become one. Hence the clear suggestion that on the scale of character-types in *Der Schwierige*, genuine self-love or "egoism" is maximal toward the center, in Hans Karl and Helene. Nor is there any conflict between this idea of self-love and the idea of a characteristically social respect for otherness in people and things. Society becomes a valid symbol of the divine in mankind, thus a vehicle of self-love or an intellectual "window" into the self, only insofar as the social is prior to the individual; and the individual's acknowledgment of this priority – an acknowledgment of the priority relative to himself of

real conditions, not merely divine being – necessarily involves an attentive openness to other individuals. Thus self-love and a sensitivity for "human quality" coincide.

Even a solution to the problem of the social existence of the poet is suggested. For the poet, as a creator of particular symbols that reveal the ultimate extent of human being, may now be recognized as engaging in an entirely normal social activity. His vocation does not isolate him intellectually after all; the upholding of established social forms in daily life, by individuals like Hans Karl, is already itself in essence the creation of a metaphysical symbol. There is still such a thing as radical intellectual or expressionistic poetry, the sort of poetry that would be required by Chandos the mystic, but the poetic symbol that is integrated with the established symbolism of a particular society is no less authentic. "Marching separately" (A 151) remains an inescapable necessity for the social poet; but his internal separation is only the characteristic tension of social existence itself, between critical intellect and uncompromised participation, as we see it in Hans Karl.[8]

6

We still have the question: if the social can be realized only by way of our eccentric individuality, what does the specific experience of the social consist in? We have followed Hans Karl's thinking about chance and necessity on a metaphysical plane. The creation of a society is the transformation of the accidental group of individuals who happen to surround us into a formed symbol of universal human being or the articulated order of things; and two conditions must therefore be met by a society. Its forms must be arbitrarily restrictive (reflecting the truth of man's essential creative divinity, the arbitrary quality of all world-order); and we must nevertheless accept these forms as binding and prior to ourselves (acknowledging the Christ-like commitment of divine humanity to particular existence). It follows that a symbolic society must be exclusive, that there must be a distinction between individuals who belong to it and individuals who do not; otherwise it is not formed. The question that remains is: how does the experience of the one group of individuals differ from that of the other?

We should like to be able to say that the specific experience of the social is identical, or at least significantly consonant, with the theatrical experience implied by the text of *Der Schwierige*. That such an idea is not really far-fetched is suggested by a curious

feature of the play's structure; on the scale of character-types, the quality of rational critical detachment relative to Viennese society increases not toward the extremes, but toward the center. We might have expected the opposite; it is at the extremes that we encounter characters who obviously do not belong to the society, characters who ought to have a certain perspective. But Vinzenz and the professor, the outermost pair, evidently have no better a perspective on upper-class Vienna than a flea has on its dog. Neugebauer and Neuhoff, the next pair in, both express negative critical opinions; but Neugebauer's ideas are merely class-reflexes, and Neuhoff, though he is intelligent and articulate, is one of those people "in whose mouth all nuances are altered involuntarily" (L2 197). There is doubtless a real perception in his praise of Helene: "You are like no one else. Your simplicity is the result of an enormous tension [Anspannung]" (L2 252). The trouble is that these words remind us so clearly of Hans Karl's remark on Furlani's "Nonchalance," which describes social existence as such, not a unique quality in any individual. Neuhoff is aware of the social, and of its importance for an unbalanced character like his own ("meine Rettung – meine Zusammenfassung, meine Ermöglichung!" [L 254]), but he does not see it where it really is, in society. His statement to the professor, about these Viennese who "no longer exist in reality," is characteristic. He sees through the social as if it were not there; it does not even have the status of a real object for him, and he is in no position to exercise his critical intelligence on it.

As we move toward the center, however, into the society proper, we begin to encounter serious social thought, silly as some of it may be: first the Hechingens, who worry about society, and about how to turn its workings to their advantage, on an almost superstitious level; then Altenwyl's *laudatio temporis acti*, as contrasted with Crescence's self-conscious delight in present triviality and future possibility; then Lukas and Stani, who "study" the social (as we do) by way of the figure of Hans Karl; and finally Hans Karl himself, who, along with Helene (we recall her very first words, on "Konversation" [L2 216]), is earnestly, engagingly and trenchantly critical of the social as such, with its hopeless misunderstandings. Fuller participation thus goes together with a more rationally critical attitude toward the society, an attitude that eventually strips away all pretence and leaves only "symbolic" validity. It is this attitude that produces the "Anspannung" perceived by Neuhoff in Helene and by Hans Karl in himself via Furlani. Human existence is a difficult business requiring considerable concentration, as

becomes especially evident at the boundary of the society proper, in the Hechingens who stand just within it and in Neuhoff and Neugebauer immediately outside. But the effort expended by these characters serves as an index by which to measure the "redoubled" effort that is required of the less obviously strained characters nearer the center; Furlani's nonchalance requires "exactly twice as much" critical strength as the others' effortful tricks. Belonging to society, at its most perfect, demands *both* the effort of critical reason *and* the self-critical effort of suppressing one's critical distance.

Not only the symbolic quality of the social, but also the specific metaphysical truth it symbolizes, requires the doubling of tension or concentration by which the adept individual fits into social forms. Human nature is always in tension between the infinite and the finite, between the divine creativity of our being and the individual's actual mortal condition. Insofar as we are self-conscious, insofar as there is no escaping the infinite intellectual aspect of ourselves which "has its seat among the upper stars," we cannot but recognize the needless absurdity of our finite condition. This tension, however, engenders the temptation of pre-existence, the temptation to enjoy intellectually the paradox of our nature rather than carry out the commitment to a particular mortal existence without which our infinite being cannot be realized in the first place. We are thus also subject to a tension between awareness and commitment; and in that we actually experience this second tension, which we do only by resisting the temptation of pre-existence, we do not relieve, but rather augment, the tension between infinite and finite, by carrying it out in reality (by being committed to that finitude which achieves our infinite being), so that the temptation to enjoy intellectually the achieved paradoxical glory of our being becomes correspondingly stronger. There is no such thing as relaxation. The "simplicity" of an individual who has apparently achieved full reconciliation with existence is the product of a potentiation in critical consciousness, a redoubling of the essential tension in human nature.

And it follows from the symbolic nature of the social that the relation of the individual to society must be characterized by the same doubling of tension. There is no escaping our awareness of the absurd arbitrariness or unreality of social forms; and our acceptance of these forms as binding, our participation in society, thus involves a constant inner tension that in turn intensifies the original absurdity, since by virtue of our participation the social

forms in question become more than a mere idea. This tension between awareness and participation corresponds to the metaphysical tension between temptation and commitment, and to the idea of the social as poised between fragmentation and petrifaction.

The technical aspect of this idea of doubleness, finally, is opened in the letter to Wildgans, when Hofmannsthal says that in *Der Schwierige* he has hidden his personal metaphysical thinking "under the irony of figuration [Gestaltung], actually under a redoubled irony of figuration in a social, [already] formed element." To contain metaphysical truth in the mimetic mode ("Gestaltung") involves irony, since the idea of an external reality available to be imitated is already a violation of truth. But to depict in the mimetic mode a complex of social forms that itself symbolizes, or contains ironically, the metaphysical truth in question, involves a doubling of irony that at once both attenuates and authenticates the truth. The truth is now at one further remove from us (we receive not a symbol, but the imitation *of* a symbol of the truth); and yet, the mimetic quality of the proceeding, the representation of the symbol only by an imitation of itself, the absence or non-achievement of even the symbol, let alone the truth, also involves us a stage deeper in the true nature of the symbol, in its dependence, in order to exist and to operate, on our distance or eccentricity with respect to it. This union of attenuation with authentication is itself significant, for the quality of the truth itself, again, is that it is affirmed only by being kept at an ironic distance.

7

The most important consequence of this argument, however, is that it implies that the specific experience of the social is nothing but the clear, rational, and maximally self-potentiated *perception* of a particular society in all its absurdity: its absurd artificiality, clinging to the brink of a real abyss that must eventually swallow it; the absurd necessity that it realize itself only by way of eccentric individuals; the absurdity of a coherent order based on misunderstandings. And this complex of perceptions is in turn nothing but the experience of a thinking spectator in the theater of *Der Schwierige*. The unavoidable alienation of spectator from stage is thus again exploited to produce a reality realer than real. Our participation in our own actual society tends to become habit, with a consequent loss of perspective, whereas in the theater our

experience of the social in all its pristine clarity, as a full recognition of the absurd, is reawakened. Nor is it necessary that we belong to the particular Viennese society depicted.[9] Precisely our sense of detachment from this society is crucial in the experience; our detachment as spectators is only a potentiated form of eccentricity. For the time being, in the theater, as I have argued in connection with the idea of "understanding" the play, we *do* in a strong sense belong to the society of the fiction.[10]

Der Schwierige is thus a definite step beyond the ethical exercise of *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin.* Whereas in the earlier play the object is a certain balance between alienation and involvement, the object in *Der Schwierige* is an actual union of the two. What is required of us here is complete detachment, a full critical understanding of the metaphysical doctrine of the social; for such an understanding, sufficiently developed, itself *becomes the experience of the social.* Again, critical understanding increases toward the center. And that this is not a comfortable experience, that it is plagued with difficulties, misunderstandings, problems – like the experience of a Hans Karl or a Chandos – is but a further token of its authenticity. Chandos has been left behind, his sense of life now modified by the homecomer's recognition of the social function of intellect; social existence now includes and exploits the critical intellect, no longer attempts, like Chandos, to silence it or to undermine it immediately by a self-negating irony. But the distinction between intellectual and social *existence* remains in force, and there is still no bridge between the two. Professor Brücke and Neuhoff, by attempting to bridge the gap with Viennese society, violate the integrity of intellectual existence, the uncompromised striving for a direct realization of truth. Intellectual existence is ineluctably tragic; its tragedy is now being played out on a large scale in the war that rumbles behind the scenes of *Der Schwierige.* (Nowadays, Hofmannsthal has said, "Politik" and "Geist" are merged.) From the point of view of intellectual existence, the engagingly trivial world we are involved in via *Der Schwierige* does not even exist. But from the point of view of social existence, our perception of the helplessness and inevitable collapse of our version of society is but an elaboration of that critical awareness which *is* the experience of the social, and so confirms us precisely in our sense of belonging.

There is still a difficulty in this reading of *Der Schwierige*, which has to do with the question of our point of view as an audience. On one hand, the play exploits our eccentricity, with respect to the

perfection of the social, in order to include even the auditorium in the social space that is established on the stage. But on the other hand, this use of the spectator's critical distance aims at awakening in him the whole paradox of the social, as represented by Hans Karl; and this paradox, this experience, *is* the perfection of the social, so that our position is not eccentric after all. Or from a technical point of view, the symbolic exploitation of our critical detachment is characteristic, for Hofmannsthal, of the lyrical mode; but the combination of this intellectual exercise with an insistence on strict mimetic cohesion (which is not the same as mimetic accuracy) apparently involves us in an *ethical* resolve to carry out a commitment to the particular, to accept as binding a set of artistic conventions which, in view of the play's strongly expressed "metaphysical kernel," is every bit as arbitrary as any set of social conventions, and so serves as a symbol for the latter. And exactly where are we then? At the center or on the fringe? Is our critical understanding of the play sufficient of itself to engage us in the experience of the social, or does that experience merely beckon to us from afar?

Or in theatrical terms, our point of view as spectators is automatically eccentric in the direction of the intellectual. Our critical awareness has as its object not only the limits and the questionability of particular social forms, but also, by way of the play's geometrical focus on Hans Karl and Helene, the *desirability* of the social, the idea of society as an achievement. We are not in a position to regard social occasions with the "horror" Hans Karl professes to feel – especially in the anonymity of the darkened auditorium, where we are safe from embarrassments of the sort that characterize the fictional world. Those embarrassments, in the theater, have a definite air of harmless inconsequence and unreality; they are the nodal points of a dance-figure created by entrances and exits in the securely bounded area of light before us – a figure, we have seen, that communicates its quality as dance by conspicuously avoiding certain possibilities. At least for now, in the theater, we *enjoy* the social, as Hans Karl claims not to, and can it still be maintained that our point of view merges with his? Or perhaps even our detached aesthetic enjoyment in truth belongs directly to the experience of the social, as part of what must be kept silent for the sake of the integrity of society as an order of manners. If we adopt this last view, then – as in *Der Tor und der Tod*, though now with a different irony – the actors on the stage, *as* actors, whose knowledge is as aesthetically comprehensive as ours, but who nevertheless remain strictly within their mimetically defined rôles, become a

symbol of what we must accomplish in reality. But in the theater we are not yet doing the play-acting ourselves, and there is thus still a certain inconclusiveness in our thinking; like Stani, we understand that the socialness of a Hans Karl must be "effortless" (L2 188) and also that such effortlessness is the product of protracted "study," but we have not yet integrated this paradox into our own activity.

Like Stani, we must take Hans Karl as a model for the sort of existence our experience in the theater tends toward; Stani's apparently naive categorizing of individuals is exactly what we have been doing, and have had to do, in order to understand the play's geometry. The reason for the special importance that attaches to Stani as a character ought now to be fully clear. Stani reflects and locates, within the drama itself, the point of view of the audience; and if we understand that there is a possible transition from being Stani to being Hans Karl – not by a denial but by a further development of both self-love and critical perspective – we perhaps also receive a sense for the possibility of our own entrance into the social. Perhaps our problematic situation in the theater, though no less problematic for it, is at least represented by Stani, the situation of being somehow at once both entirely within society – we recall the suggestion of Stani's being protected, enfolded – yet also still only on the way to social existence.

In any case, the play cannot *carry out* for us our binding of ourselves to the social. Hans Karl's last speech to Stani, his last speech but one in the play, is addressed to the audience as well: "Es war verfehlt, mein lieber Stani, meiner Suada etwas anzuvertrauen" (L2 313), "It was a mistake to entrust anything to my ability as a talker." It would be foolish to expect this comedy's rhetoric actually to accomplish our social existence for us. Art cannot govern our experience or effect a significant change in our mode of being. "Not to be able to help! Not that much!" (L2 202), Hans Karl complains. But then Agathe replies, "Oder versuchen Sies doch." Try anyway. Even in its knowledge of futility, art perhaps must still do what it can, and at least confront us – by way of play-acting as a symbol or the figure of Stani or the tension of the theater as a model for the inherent tension of social existence – with a true sense of where we belong.

8

The question of the quality of our experience of the social is thus answerable, but in a manner that creates as many problems as it

solves. The paradox of the social and the intellectually critical in Hans Karl – the same combination as in Chandos, yet without the possibility of arguing that the intellectual is itself a social device – is now more or less explainable, as constituting the very shape of our experience of the social; but the question of what we are doing in the theater, what function, for us or for society, the comic theater of *Der Schwierige* carries out, is as difficult as ever. Clearly the theater is not meant here to be transformed magically into the secret heart and origin of creative human being, like the theater of *Der Tor und der Tod*; but the theater is also not expected to provide an effortless entrance for us into the truly "symbolic" society it envisages. On the contrary, our situation in society, to the extent that we bring it with us to this theater, is made more difficult, called into question, insisted upon as a problem, by way of the problem of our precise relation to the stage and the fiction.

Still, given the fictional background of the war, the actual background of the postwar period, and such documents as Hofmannsthal's "Appell an die oberen Stände," it can hardly be doubted that *Der Schwierige* is meant to realize for its theater a reinvigorating function within actual society. And perhaps precisely the problematizing of our relation to the social is the method by which a renewal is to be effected. In order to deal with the Chandos letter, we must begin by recognizing that what is presented as mystical illumination is in truth the ordinary substance of human experience. In order to deal with *Der Schwierige*, perhaps we must begin by acknowledging the ordinariness of *social* experience; we have already recognized that critical detachment from our society does not conflict with that experience. Perhaps, in the letter to Wildgans, Hofmannsthal is speaking not of a "problem" that needs to be solved, but of a problem that must be constantly renewed, constantly recentered in our social life, constantly reawakened in our individual consciousness. Perhaps any belief in a solution to this problem is itself merely a symptom of that morbid tendency toward rigidity of form which obscures the symbolic quality of the society it affects.

I have spoken of the question of throwing the theater open to social actuality, and of its relation to Hofmannsthal's thought on the subject of chance or "Tyche." But it may make more sense to speak of society's throwing itself open to drama, to argue that actual society, in order to remain truly symbolic, must acknowledge and preserve its essentially dramatic quality. Our problematic situation vis-à-vis the social in *Der Schwierige*, both on the fringe

and in the midst of it, is simply our *typical* situation in the theater, the particular manifestation of a general *paradoxe sur le spectateur*.[11] Faced with the danger of rigidity, the danger (we recall Hofmannsthal's "Appell") that the movements of social intercourse will become mere gestures and lose the quality of "deeds," it is our actual society that requires a reinjection of the problematic, a reawakening of its dramatic nature. Society itself is basically drama, and the function of the theater within society is not to create social existence, but to regenerate or reinvigorate, to re-problematize our sense for social existence as we *already* experience it.

The Scylla and Charybdis of the social, at least as the social is understood in *Der Schwierige*, are fragmentation and rigidity; and during the decade or so following the Chandos letter, Hofmannsthal appears to have regarded comedy as the theater's defense of society against fragmentation, while tragedy's business is to guard against rigidity. This apportioning of functions seems natural enough. The comic vision is a vision of reconciliation, whereas the tragic theater of naked truth opens our eyes to the horror of existence and so overwhelms our complacent acceptance of established form. According to this view, *Abenteurer* and *Cristina*, in their advocacy of a disciplined containment of intellectual freedom, operate as comedies. But in the course of working on *Der Schwierige* – and in response, it seems to me, to the difficulties of conception that we have observed in *Theater in Versen*, *Cristina*, and the post-Chandos tragedies – Hofmannsthal reverses himself completely. The relation of the audience to the stage in the finished version of *Der Schwierige* makes sense only if we regard this comedy as a problematizing of our social situation, hence a theatrical initiative against the danger of rigidity. In Part III, I will argue that the task of preserving society against fragmentation is taken up in the musical and festival plays, and that Hofmannsthal's reversal is completed in the new tragic type represented by *Der Turm*.

It is now clear, therefore, why there should be a special relationship between *Der Schwierige* and the theater of naked truth. Strictly speaking, the theater of naked truth cannot be perfected, since the nature of art is to render truth symbolically, to clothe it, make it bearable. Hofmannsthal understands Nietzsche's thought on this point and on the necessity of illusion; but his first serious attempt to apply it to the theater of naked truth is *Jedermann*, where the situation in the theater is meant to be a reflection of the action on stage, a kind of conversion *in extremis*. *Jedermann* is

meant as a more logical working out of the theatrical situation of the tragedies. The artistic vision of naked truth, precisely by being an artistic vision, is *automatically* also a vision of salvation. If artistic or poetic vision is possible in the first place, then this possibility alone, the possibility of Apollonian illusion, rescues us from the naked truth;[12] and Jedermann's rescue from perdition represents our public acknowledgment of the consequent inaccessibility of truth in pure tragic form. The moment of respite, the "Redens und Ratens ein Stündlein Zeit" (D3 52) that Jedermann receives from Death, corresponds to the time-outside-of-time we spend in the theater, and so corresponds in general to the symbolic self-consciousness integral in our existence, by which we carry out our own escape from perdition, the necessary self-blinding or forgetting (with respect to pure truth) that makes existence possible.

But there is still an inconsistency in *Jedermann*, for the actual effective presence in the theater of a vision of utter truth is still presupposed, as a spur and starting point for the movement of rescue, for the transformation then effected by Death's revealed character as both the ultimate reality and the original self-conscious, time-generating idea. *Der Schwierige*, on the other hand, is built on the recognition that truth as such can never be the content of an artistic vision, that it is never actually present to us even for an instant, that we approach truth only by symbols; especially in society we enact the difficult but manageable tensions of social existence as a symbolic intimation of the tensions of our metaphysical being, which latter are excluded from experience. If *Jedermann* is a logical step beyond the tragedies, then *Der Schwierige* represents a step further. Theater by nature presupposes an ordered community, hence already a certain commitment on our part to the social as an approach to truth; therefore the introduction of truth itself as a force into the theater, as in *Jedermann*, in order that it may be transformed there (perhaps by the laws of the "Ursprung aller Religionen" [L2 226]) into a vision of salvation, is merely a pretence, like that of Neuhoff the intellectual Faustian "Wanderer" (L2 194).

Social existence, as we learn already from Chandos, is an approach to the truth, a way of living as close to truth as possible, not a retreat from truth into insignificance, which is how Neuhoff and the professor see it. And it follows that insofar as the theater of *Der Schwierige*, in its relation to its audience, faithfully represents and regenerates the tensions of social existence, this theater *is*, as

far as possible, a theater of truth. The very nature of society as a symbol is to exist on the brink of the abyss, to enable its members to live their metaphysical humanness as fully as possible, as close as possible to the paradox of divine humanity which in pure form would be insupportable; and the function of the theater is to move society in this direction, not by exploding its established symbolism, which could only lead away from the truth, but rather by distilling that symbolism, by re-problematizing it and so restoring its translucence relative to that burning presence of the divine and the tragic which it is in truth meant to reveal.[13] The Chandos letter itself already attempts a problematizing of social existence, a revelation of the mystically illuminated and obscurely anguished depths beneath its surface. The direct jump from Chandos to *Der Schwierige* in some of Hofmannsthal's sketches of his own development, and the dismissal of the theater of naked truth that is implied by that jump, thus become understandable.

9

The idea of *Der Schwierige* as comedy at the brink of the abyss can be developed further. For we have not yet dealt with the second part of what Hofmannsthal describes to Wildgans as the play's central problem: "how can the speaker act – since speaking is already knowledge, thus the suspension of action." The idea of action refers most directly to Hans Karl's decision to marry, for marriage is the topic on which he has done a good deal of involved and profound talking. How can Hans Karl, the metaphysical theorist of marriage, carry out the act itself in reality?

We must first be clear about the significance of marriage as such. In "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" Hofmannsthal arrives at the understanding that even a thoroughly practical life tends toward crisis, a crisis that corresponds symmetrically to the Chandos crisis in the life of the artist. I maintain that in *Der Schwierige* that crisis in practical life is understood in relation to social existence. Hans Karl has arrived at a critical situation that he himself describes in the image of how Furlani drops a flowerpot he has been balancing on his nose. Namely the individual closest to the center, who practices social existence most perfectly, is most in danger of believing, "wenn mans ganz schön machen tät, müßts von selber gehen" (L2 221), "if one were to make a really good job of it, it would have to go of its own accord" – which is not the case. Social existence, in order to operate symbolically, does not run automati-

cally ("von selber gehen") but must be a constant renewal of effort, "an eternal beginning over"; when it ceases to be a problem, when the performer becomes too sure of himself, its constitutive balance or tension is destroyed. The parallel with "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" is very close. As long as "Deutschland" is only an unrealizable inner state and source of strength, the homecomer remains active and balanced; but when he actually arrives in Germany, and expects his existence to fulfil itself "of its own accord," his existence collapses in ruins.

At the corresponding dangerous point in social existence, where the character of the social as a problem begins to fade, an *act* is necessary, a new assertion of order in the face of chance, an arbitrary binding of the self within drastically narrower limits. This is the function of marriage. Just as the binding of oneself to social forms is a symbol of the self-binding of divine humanity to mortal existence, so the still narrower self-binding of marriage is a symbolic reaffirmation of that first constitutive act of social existence. Society is the self-limiting human act by which we achieve a vital relation to our universal being, and marriage is the still further self-limiting act, within society, by which we restore our vital relation to the social. Betrothal is not a transformation or elevation for Hans Karl – as is obvious from his unregenerateness in the last scenes ("Aber es ist die letzte Soiree, auf der Sie mich erscheinen sieht" [L2 313]); rather, it is the act by which he *remains* what he is.

But how does he manage to arrive at his decision? He shows a deep and comprehensive awareness of the significance of marriage, and it is clear from the first conversation with Helene that his very knowledge concerning the sacredness of marriage has caused him to dissociate the idea from his own personal existence. Why does this inhibition not function in the second conversation? To an extent we have already answered this question. The decision to marry Helene takes Hans Karl by surprise; it is made feasible by sheer coincidence and does not grow out of his thinking. It also receives an arbitrary or reckless quality from the general incongruity and confusion of the atmosphere: the promise made to Antoinette that must now be broken; the easily anticipated embarrassment in facing Crescence and Stani, not to mention Altenwyl; the departure scheduled for seven the next morning.

More significant, however, is the philosophical circumvention of the problem of activity, in that the union of Hans Karl and Helene reveals language as a primary reality, prior to the existence of the people who use it or the things it talks about. If action is a function

of the individual, then the individual's self-distance in verbal articulation is a problem; if action is a direct function of language, if the individual, as individual, *is* already only an embodied verbal action, then the problem disappears. We have seen that when Hans Karl says to Helene, "How well you know me!" he is acknowledging not an appraisal of his character, but rather the adeptness and discretion with which she has managed her end of the conversation. In saying "Wie du mich kennst!" he is not referring to his real self – the very idea of a real self is questionable with regard to this "Mann ohne Absicht"[14] – but rather he signifies his acceptance of the rôle that the conversation has created for him. And yet, it is not as if "he" (the real Hans Karl) were putting on a mask that is somehow less than real. He *is* his rôle, irretrievably, and the quasi-dramatic ceremony of marriage will establish that identity as a communally recognized fact. The transformation of chance into necessity is not merely an operation carried out *by* individuals upon external objects; such an operation would be merely "will," in Neuhoff's sense. The transformation of chance into necessity is also a process by which the individual himself first fully comes into being, pulled up by his own bootstraps (L2 243)[15] out of the mire, out of the experience of "how accidental we all are."

The factual and logical contradictions in the Act III conversation, beginning with Helene's invoking of Hans Karl's "will," are crucial, for they hypostasize the language, destroy its referentiality, divorce it from any reality that might be regarded as prior to it. "I am a boundless egoist," insists Hans Karl, and Helene answers, "Oh? I don't think so" (L2 300), even though she herself had earlier admitted the applicability of the word "conceit" (L2 255) to him. And after she receives his "Wie du mich kennst!" she ventures into greater detail concerning what she has "known" about his relations with other women (just as she had earlier waited for his first hesitant "du" before going into detail about his "will"). She now says of his mistresses, "After a very short while they all stopped mattering to you, and you had an enormous pity for them, but no feeling of friendship: that was my comfort" (L2 301). She thus reciprocates by accepting a rôle of her own, that of the suffering but understanding woman, which is as inaccurate, as obvious a rewriting of the past, as the rôle Hans Karl accepts. And after he prompts her yet again – "How well you know everything!" – she adds, "I existed only in that knowledge." At the very least, this is an exaggeration. We had seen her earlier accept with perfect composure ("Auch das hab ich voraus gewußt" [L2 262]) Hans

Karl's severing of their relationship; in fact, in her response to the story of Furlani, "And the flowerpot usually gets tired of that and falls down" (L2 221), she had suggested that she herself might soon have to put an end to their emotional balancing-act. But there is no question of objective accuracy here. Hans Karl had said earlier, "neither of us plays [cards] anyway" (L2 223),[16] and in their first tête-à-tête he and Helene had in fact not "played," but had exchanged monologues, each mainly concerned to present and defend a complex idea of his own character. Now, however, they *are* playing the game, and accept without quibbling the rôles that now become their very selves.

Helene now says with a straight face, "I wouldn't have moved my little finger to drive such a woman away from you. It would not have been worth it" (L2 301), even though her earlier conversational strategy had included the admission that she had been about to risk everything for just "her part" of Hans Karl. And he answers by speaking of the "magic" in her that makes him so "tranquil in himself," even though he had agreed, only a few moments earlier, to be a restless nature that must "always desire more and more." Helene, in turn, is not troubled by this inconsistency, but takes the cue and comes as close to actually mentioning marriage as either of them ever does: "Of course you have no conception of the friendship I bear toward you. That will take you a long time to get – if you can give me that time" (L2 302). And Hans Karl, finally, in the last words of the love-duet proper, before the subject is changed to practical matters, sums up the whole proceeding in the words, "Wie du das sagst!" "How you say that!" What counts here is not what Hans Karl and Helene are, or how they feel, but *how they speak*, how their very natures are constantly adjusted to accommodate and shape and elaborate the developing fabric of language.

By contrast with the first conversation, in which Helene had talked at great length about her own nature, and Hans Karl at even greater length about his, the second conversation reduces to an absurdity the very idea of the self. "The sense of marriage is mutual dissolution and palingenesis" (A 29), says Hofmannsthal, and in the case of Helene and Hans Karl the medium of this mystery is language. But neither she nor he is "fixed" into a new personality by their union; the danger from which their union saves them, as the Act II conversation shows, had been the tendency toward fixed personality. Hans Karl, though as changeable and "difficult" as ever, had reached a point where changeableness itself becomes an

unchanging condition, where confusion becomes merely a self-expressive game (as for Furlani), where the self-love of the truly social individual begins to atrophy into narrow-mindedness. And Helene, with her fatalism and her manners of an old lady, is always similarly in danger of losing her flexibility. Hans Karl's awareness of this danger, not in himself but in Helene, had prompted him to insist on *her* regeneration by marriage; and those speeches of his, which had actually expressed his own inner state, had in turn broken Helene's self-control by confronting her with the truth of tragic humanity, the spectacle of a man who is prevented from carrying out the sacred act of marriage precisely by his knowledge of its sacredness, hence a vision of the unbridgeable gap between knowledge and realization. She is in the grip of this tragic vision when she says "Adieu!" to the man who had once been Hans Karl, and when she then arrives at her own tragic decision to follow the apparently unregenerable adventurer into the night.

Then, however, comes the chance meeting in the entrance hall, and both Hans Karl and Helene are prepared to exploit it, for the situation now is not a solemnly personal one, requiring sincerity, but rather a problematic social one, offering an irresistible challenge to their verbal agility. We no longer hear Helene saying resignedly, "I think I have already thought every possible thought that has to do with the two of us" (L2 262); and we no longer hear Hans Karl answering, with a gravity verging on the pompous, "It is not just on the spur of the moment that I am saying adieu to you" (L2 262–3). Now, in Act III, decisions *are* made on the spur of the moment; now the parties change position constantly in a verbal fencing match that makes nonsense of the very idea of the self as a knowable object; now, in Hans Karl and Helene, the human personality becomes what it truly is, "a glowing focus of fire and love" (P3 367).

What occurs is not a transformation of Hans Karl and Helene so much as a restoration of what they truly are and always have been, as social beings; it is the overcoming of a crisis in which they, like the homecomer, had begun to experience the self as an object. Despite Hans Karl's protests, Stani had been entirely right in saying, "Pardon, Uncle Kari, one can't take anything literally with you" (L2 188); Hans Karl's trouble, in the first conversation with Helene, had been precisely that he had violated his nature by taking *himself* too literally. But now the crisis is overcome, in the same way as for the homecomer, by a sense of the self as creative energy, as a divine formative power asserting itself against chaos or

chance – here by means of an order of language in which the self's particular existence becomes a mere rôle. The paradox of freedom and constraint is perfected in the lovers' union; in becoming more narrowly bound than ever before, they also achieve a maximum of freedom from being "fixed" as knowable personalities. And the perfection of this paradox is an arrival at the play's geometrical center, an apotheosis of the social.

This event, moreover, is available for our participation as an audience, at least if we have been following the plot; for the accidentalness of the meeting in the entrance hall reminds us of the *artificiality* of the proceeding in which we are involved in the theater. Hans Karl and Helene have earlier agreed tacitly upon a tragic view of life; she intends to follow him, in an act of tragic self-loyalty like Electra's, beyond the bounds of the socially possible. The chance meeting in the entrance hall thus does not follow (as we say) organically, either from the plot or from the point that has been reached in character development. It is sheer "coincidence," an entirely arbitrary artistic device that solves an intrinsically insoluble problem, and as such *it reveals the true nature of the drama as a whole*. Just as the Act III conversation is a delicate verbal edifice supporting itself precariously above the abyss of an inadmissible reality, so the whole of what happens in the theater is revealed as *our* arbitrary assertion of a fragile socio-verbal order in the face of our full tragic knowledge that true order is logically realizable only as catastrophe. Like marriage itself, the "Zeremonie" in the theater is a symbolic act *within* society by which the absurdly arbitrary symbolic act that *is* society is reaffirmed and revitalized.

And the vehicle of this symbolic act, again, is a divorce between language and reality. The Act III conversation begins with language teetering on the brink of reality; but the reality in question, Hans Karl's real reason for returning, is simply negated, and the language assumes a world-structure of its own. Only thus can there be an answer to the question of how a speaking being still manages to act. For the contradiction between speaking and acting follows from the assumption that language refers to reality. We speak *about* something in great detail, as Hans Karl does about marriage, and we perhaps intend to realize our speaking as action; but by speaking we have detached ourselves from the imagined reality – "Wie käm ich als ein Außenstehender zu der Zeremonie" (L2 266) – and are no longer in contact with it *as* reality; "What is expressed already passes into the general [ins Allgemeine]," and the par-

ticular reality can no longer measure up. The speaker therefore can act in accordance with his speaking only insofar as the relation between language and reality is severed and language itself is realized as the world-order within which we truly live and act. But the individual cannot accomplish this operation alone; language for the lone individual can become a dream-order, but not strictly a world-order. The divorce of language from the abject mental attitude of "reality" can happen only within language "as a social element, as *the* social element" (A 231); society, as exalted in the union of Hans Karl and Helene, the society of "conversation," is the only possible bridge between the speaker and his own self-realization in action.

10

In principle, it is reasonable to expect a literary interpretation to break down into several different ways of looking at the work; and in the case of *Der Schwierige*, given the complexity of its background and genesis, it is not unreasonable to allow for a certain amount of contradiction. The apparent contradictions that affect the present discussion can be brought under three main heads:

1. The idea of chance is crucial in both dialogue and plot, as well as in various manuscript notes related to *Der Schwierige*, and the same idea is important in Hofmannsthal's development as a whole, by its relation to the idea of the theater as a social model. With *Der Schwierige* in mind, we can now state the *problem* of chance a bit more clearly. Only by way of the understanding of "how accidental we all are," only by way, somehow, of the experience of our accidentalness, can we in turn experience our deliberate self-binding within society (in marriage, for example, or in the arbitrary conventions of art) as a true self-creation, a coming-into-being, hence a valid symbol of the primordial self-binding by which society represents a universal human order erected against chaos. If the individual is not strictly accidental, if he experiences himself as including an immutable (already-created) self or ego or soul, then his self-binding may have ethical value but cannot have the character of self-creation. And yet, how can an individual conceivably experience his own self as accidental? If I cannot distinguish between my ego, even "my ego of yesterday," and the ego of, say, Napoleon or Goethe, am I not merely insane? The individual must *experience* his accidentalness, but cannot *know* it. The problem is

for Hofmannsthal a typical poetic problem; what is required of poetry is the saying of the unsayable, the communication, by some ironic strategy, of a knowledge that cannot be known. But how, by what sort of irony, can the experience of accident, especially the accidentalness of the recipient's own self, be included in the poetic or dramatic or theatrical process? Precisely our understanding of the *function* of accident in such a process – like the understanding worked out above concerning the meeting in the entrance hall – has already transformed accident into a kind of necessity.

2. Perhaps easier to state, but no less difficult to resolve conclusively, is the question, yet again, of Hans Karl's and Helene's union. Marriage in general, if the above argument holds, is a symbolic affirmation within society of the act of self-binding or particularization which is the nature of society; it is therefore an act carried out *by individuals*, reaffirming the unknowable but undeniable communal act to which they owe their particular existence. But on the other hand, the betrothal of Hans Karl and Helene is also an instance of action considered as a mystery, a posing and pointing of the question, "how can one who speaks still act?" And it is this question that compels us to understand that all true action occurs on the level of the communal, of language as such, *not* as an achievement of the individual; Hans Karl and Helene find each other as creatures of their own conversation. If we distinguish planes of discourse with sufficient subtlety, we can probably avoid a direct logical contradiction here; but an unclarity in our grasp of our own situation, vis-à-vis the play, remains nonetheless.

3. Then, finally, there is the question of Hans Karl's character. Does he change or develop or arrive at an understanding of himself in the course of the play? Or does he simply remain what he is? For the purposes of the argument above both of these alternatives must be true, and I have therefore had recourse to formulations with a Hegelian flavor; Hans Karl, I have suggested, becomes what he truly is. Perhaps the difficulty here has to do with Indo-European grammar, a difficulty of the sort Nietzsche treats in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. If I write a sentence with "Hans Karl" as the subject, then the very form of the statement contains assumptions that I am attempting to question. Therefore I have suggested the possibility of regarding Hans Karl as a technical or dramaturgical entity, as *nothing but* a dramatic character, not as a fiction that imitates some hypothetical real person, but as a person who has no characteristics

whatever that are not derivable from the conventions of the artistic form in which he appears. On this basis the formulations I have defended above at least begin to make sense. For the dramatic character, as such, is literally made out of dialogue; the dialogue of the work is his very substance, in the same way that within the fiction Hans Karl is the creature of his own second conversation with Helene. And the dramatic character literally becomes what he is; for he exists as a distinguishable entity in the work as a whole, yet only by way of what we accept by convention as the temporally extended poetic process that builds him up. But in order to be interpretively useful, the idea of Hans Karl as an embodiment of dramatic convention must be based on more than just its convenience for a particular argument.

These, then, are the main difficulties that arise from the various ways we have looked at *Der Schwierige*; and we now require one further way of looking at the play that will account for these difficulties. The idea that the play is meant to re-problematize our existence is, for this purpose, insufficiently specific, since it could conceivably be used to account for any difficulties whatever. But I think there is a line of argument that will answer, and that also has the advantage of being firmly based in Hofmannsthal's development, both philosophically and theatrically.

As readers we adopt by convention an attitude of acceptance with respect to fictional characters; within limits we accept what the text says, at least as a basis for drawing the inferences that the work's genre suggests to us. Therefore, as readers of *Der Schwierige*, we tend to lose sight of how great a problem the indirect characterization of Hans Karl, and also of Helene, poses *for a theater audience*. If a dramatic character is presented as having a quality that cannot be enacted on the stage (like Vittoria's singing), indirect characterization, within limits, is acceptable. But in the case of Hans Karl, the qualities that are attributed to him by other figures *are* enactable in gesture and dialogue: his elegance, his "air," his "distance," his effortlessness as "großer Herr." But he never gets a chance to show these qualities, for he never appears except in intimate or embarrassing situations; we do not see him at his casino. It is as if we were to learn of Prince Hal's talent for vulgar amusement only through the reports of others.

The theater audience at least, if not the reader, thus receives distinctly the sense that Hans Karl's exemplary qualities are attributed *to* him more than they are observed *in* him. Given the

qualities in question, therefore, qualities requiring for their very existence the interaction with other people, it is but a short step, for the spectator of *Der Schwierige*, to the idea that Hans Karl's excellence, the reason for his "extraordinary prominence" in society, *consists* in its being attributed to him, that the figure of Hans Karl is a *creation* of the society in which he moves – or indeed, as becomes especially clear in the chatter of Antoinette's three friends, that Hans Karl and Helene, both, are a kind of *superstition* in that society.

Even if the actor does manage to convey a sense of superiority, still the expressions of opinion about Hans Karl, and expressions of near-superstitious admiration or fear (Neuhoff describes their conversation as a "duel" [L2 257]), pile up much faster than they can be mimically represented. Moreover, opinions about Hans Karl conflict strongly with one another, but in such a way that even some of the most outrageous are substantiated. Stani's words, we have seen, are often silly in their immediate context but true in general. And Neuhoff, stupid as he may be to say it, is shown by events to be correct in describing his encounter with Hans Karl as a "duel" for Helene; Hans Karl had in fact been upset by Helene's association with him, and does in fact later claim her for himself. Opinions about Hans Karl conflict; but the opening scenes with Lukas and Vinzenz signal to us that such opinions are to be taken seriously, and some of the most ridiculous of them are shown to have a core of truth. Hans Karl, in other words, is not a person with particular properties to which true statements about him must refer consistently. He is, rather, a kind of social totem, a focal point for even drastically conflicting hopes and fears and beliefs in his society. Or to put it in terms that will make clear the drift of my argument on Hofmannsthal's career, Hans Karl is a communal *hallucination.*

I maintain that this idea is both logical and reasonable in a sound interpretation of *Der Schwierige*. In the first place, given Hofmannsthal's notion of "symbolic" society, it follows that the true purpose of society is to represent in reality the primal "uns," the primordial, utterly unknowable human action of binding the cosmos within an arbitrary order. Even this *purpose* is unknowable within society; for if I claim to see through the symbol to the purpose behind it, I thereby place myself outside of the actual social fabric, like Neuhoff and the professor. Society is a self-binding human *act* (Tat), which, when genuinely carried out, involves a "transition from the conscious to the unconscious," a forgetting or self-

blinding relative to truth. From within a society, therefore, it *must* appear that that particular society is "ohne Absicht," with no purpose whatever, composed solely of Crescence's "trivial people and trivial talking." But this idea contains at least the germ of a contradiction; for we cannot conceivably *found our mode of existence* upon something we sincerely consider "trivial." Our social existence must somehow make sense to us, must have an acknowledged center of purpose – which, however, cannot be its true (but unacknowledgeable) metaphysical purpose. Therefore the idea or superstition of the perfect social individual, the Hans Karl Bühl, is necessary, the sense of the social as itself a mystery, with various grades of initiation that can be achieved by "study."

In the second place, the idea of Hans Karl as a hallucination establishes exactly the sort of continuity or analogy, between the structure of the fiction and the situation of the theater audience, that we have seen is generally central in Hofmannsthal's dramaturgy. In *Der Tor und der Tod* we recognize Death as both Claudio's hallucination *and our own*. So also in *Der Schwierige*, when we recognize the hallucinatory quality of Hans Karl (and Helene) from the point of view of the observing and commenting individuals who surround them, the significance of Hans Karl's hallucinatory quality *as a dramatic character*, from *our* point of view, becomes clear. Surely the dramatic "character," as opposed to the actor who plays him, is constituted mainly by mental acts in the audience. And if we recognize that the superstition or hallucination of Hans Karl is a necessary mental act by which "symbolic" society preserves itself, then it follows that the mental act we carry out as an audience, the putting together of a "character" out of scraps of dialogue and gesture, is just such a typical social act; society, so to speak, now actually itself happens in the theater. This argument, moreover, not only provides an interpretive basis, at last, for the idea of Hans Karl as nothing but a dramatic character, his qualities determined entirely by the conventions of the form, but it also accounts for the difficulty of deciding whether our point of view, as an audience, is on the fringe or at the center of the theatrical model of society. As observers, we do stand on the fringe; but it is still *our* social imagination that is operative at the center, in creating the person of Hans Karl.

And in the third place, the idea of Hans Karl as a hallucination acknowledges the simple fact that in society, especially a society like that depicted in *Der Schwierige*, the individual is for all practical purposes identical with what people say and think about

him; everybody, so to speak, is everybody else's hallucination. (Does this idea not make optimal sense out of Hofmannsthal's remark, "that all the figures are made of criticism"?) Practically every scene of *Der Schwierige* shows this social mechanism at work; and the conversation in the entrance hall between Hans Karl and Helene is a climactic and exemplary instance of the mutual sculpting of individual character in the medium of language, the generation in language of individuals who in a strong sense had never before existed, and who, in their flagrant inconsistency, perhaps do not even have a clear right to exist. The generative relation of the other characters, and of the spectators, with respect to Hans Karl, is but an instance of this normal social phenomenon, and for the theater audience an especially self-revelatory instance, that brings into immediate consciousness our everyday participation in the social shaping of other individuals. Thus we also arrive at a way of dealing with problem 1 above, the question of the accidentalness of the self. We can never directly experience our own self as accidental. But by becoming conscious of our part in the creation of *other* selves (from whose point of view *we* are the "accidental" force), we do approach such an experience, we set up a mirror to ourselves; it is significant that the idea of "how accidental we all are" impresses itself on Hans Karl in conversation with Antoinette, upon whose existence he has already had too much effect for his own comfort and plans to have yet a further effect by teaching her the symbolic nature of marriage. In the process of actively shaping other people's individuality in the medium of language, I, like Hans Karl, do experience, by analogy, my own individuality as the accidental result of others' actions. This idea, that by shaping the existence of others we come to the experience of our own accidentalness, will become important below in the discussion of the "allomatic."

Problem 1 is thus at least circumvented, and problem 3, the question of the sense in which Hans Karl changes or remains the same, has lost most of its urgency. For Hans Karl, considered as a hallucination, is always the same entity, the envisaged summation of our social existence; but he is imagined as such by different people in drastically different ways, and so always presents the appearance of bewildering inconstancy and indecision. We are left, then, with problem 2, the question of individual action and communal or verbal action, especially as raised by the union of Hans Karl and Helene. The idea of hallucination does not resolve this question, but establishes it on the level of mystery, as a governing

tension in our existence. If Hans Karl and Helene both have the hallucinatory quality of an envisaged summation of our social existence, then their union, their enacting of the mystery of becoming one flesh, the apotheosis of language in their last conversation, their arrival at the absolute center, sets the seal on this quality. Hallucinations like Hans Karl and Helene can remain what they are only by developing, by keeping out of reach, by representing a form of existence that we, like Stani, are not yet in control of, not yet in a position to know; the idea that comedy works against the social danger of petrifaction figures here, in that the hallucination becomes a source of self-criticism and self-dissatisfaction for us. In their betrothal, accordingly, Hans Karl and Helene pass on to the plane of sheer utopian vision; in a sense, their union is of the same type as that of Bacchus and Ariadne after all, or as the ethereal love of two sopranos that closes *Der Rosenkavalier*.[17] On this level, the union of an impossible individual activity (impossible because it is prevented by an infinite consciousness) and the great unknowable world-creating act of mankind as a whole (unknowable because it is the origin of precisely the inescapable finite point of view from which it cannot be known) is set up as a symbol against which the confusions of our actual existence may be measured without being in the least relieved.

This whole argument, as I have said, represents a way of looking at *Der Schwierige*, and claims to be plausible and fruitful, but not either exclusively valid or final. It happens here, as repeatedly in Hofmannsthal, that in order even merely to make sense of the text, we must engage philosophical issues that hardly accommodate the idea of a text in the first place – except perhaps in the preter-interpretively attenuated sense of, say, de Man or Derrida – and make nonsense of the idea of the "work" as an achievement of meaning. "Das Werk," for Hofmannsthal, is one "way into existence," which means not the way to a goal, but a way to the forgetting of goals, a way to the gradual perfection of its own silent, endlessly repeated "transition" into being.

Part III
CULTURE AND COLLAPSE

13
ART BY ACCIDENT

Up to now we have concentrated on a single clear line in Hofmannsthal's development, from *Der Tor und der Tod* through the Chandos crisis to *Der Schwierige*, and on the development of an idea of ironic or social language (language used *by* us so as to reveal its use *of* us) that incorporates the metaphysical theory of lyric into a theoretically complete drama. But the argument has loose ends, corresponding to unfinished business in Hofmannsthal's thinking, and these loose ends will occupy us from here on. First I will go back to the collaboration with Strauss, especially in its implications for the theory of theater as a cultural institution. Then I will discuss Hofmannsthal's attempt to see *Andreas, Ariadne, Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Der Schwierige* as aspects of a single large vision, via the idea of the "allomatic." And in the final four chapters, mainly on the *Großes Welttheater* and *Der Turm*, I will treat the uncomfortable relation of this vision to the actual situation of poetry in culture as Hofmannsthal experienced it.

I

In both the "Ungeschriebenes Nachwort zum 'Rosenkavalier'" of 1911 and the later essay "'Der Rosenkavalier': Zum Geleit," Hofmannsthal stresses the indispensability of performance. "This work is made for the stage, not for the book" (W23 547; P3 43). And sixteen years after its composition, he asserts that the work now belongs neither to him nor to the composer, nor for that matter to literature (which is not even mentioned); rather, "it belongs to that hovering, curiously illuminated world: the theater, in which it has already stayed alive for a while, and will perhaps live a while longer" (W23 548; P4 426).

The indispensability of performance is a normal characteristic of musical drama. It is possible to interpret the text alone and the music alone, and then to talk about relations between, say,

tonalities and moods, motifs and characters, instrumental colors and feelings. But Wagner's views to the contrary notwithstanding, the languages of the poet and the composer, when put to the test of interpretation, remain (or as the case may be, become) fundamentally disjoint. It is possible to derive from the written dramatic text (as we have above) an intellectual model of the situation in the theater, and to argue in some cases that the non-realization of this model (as for a reader) renders the text's very meaning defective. The same type of argument is not possible for musical drama, where singleness of meaning is theoretically excluded. In practice, both the poet and the composer are aware of the tension between their idioms, and each leaves room for the other in his structural calculations. But this room still belongs to the structure in which it is left; it cannot exactly accommodate a second structure that is *defined* precisely by its difference. If the words and music combine in what can be understood as a self-reflexively unified artistic construct, then an ineradicable element of *accident* is involved in the combination. The "work" is an achievement primarily of its culture and its historical circumstances; or at least it is more obviously so than those works that can be regarded as a single intention operating in a single medium. (The concept operating here, incidentally, now hovers between the "accidental" and the "contingent," because two different perspectives are necessary for grasping it, that of the poet's or the audience's immediate experience and that of their larger knowledge of cultural history.)

Musical drama is in this sense always aesthetically looser than either spoken drama or concert music. No real actor can be, say, the perfect Claudio; there is no perfect Claudio for him to be. And yet, as we sit in the theater, the *fact* that we see not only Claudio, but also a particular man play-acting, becomes a focus of our attention and bears a significant relation to the text. The same type of argument can be made for *Der Schwierige*, in the spirit of the younger woman's remark in Hofmannsthal's *Tasso* dialogue: "I think that nothing on the stage is as beautiful as when a character is played who 'plays' himself," (P2 190). The climax of *Der Schwierige*, the "palingenesis" of the main figures, occurs when a process of rôle-playing, by "characters" whom the rôle-playing actors enact, displaces the idea of character altogether. The very looseness of the relation between performance and text, that we see not the "character" himself but a mere actor, thus becomes a concentrated element of meaning.[1] But this type of argument cannot be made for musical drama. The looseness of the relation between text and

music can be realized as a significant element in the text, and also in the music, but never in exactly the same way in both, and the discrepancy between idioms remains unresolved.

This, I think, is why operas, at least until recently, have normally given rise to strict traditions of performance, why performances of a given opera vary much less, even in their visual aspect, than performances of a given drama. Drama can, and perhaps should include ideally in its meaning an anticipation of its performance, which need not place undue restrictions on the actual performers, whereas opera in a strong sense first *receives* its meaning from performance, and therefore receives a *unified* meaning only from a strict tradition of performance. If an opera is to have the kind of meaning, the kind of unity, that we seek in interpreting a drama, then this meaning must be born in the opera-house, since it is not an ideal function of the work – or more precisely, since the interpretive argument necessary to assert such unity must inevitably involve associations between musical and verbal elements that will not stand up to a strict application of critical standards.[2]

The meaning of an opera is an unintendable achievement involving both work and public. The work and the public grow together over the years, and the work's meaning is indistinguishable from its integration into the cultural life of a people. This appears to be part of what attracts Hofmannsthal to opera in the first place; and it is the source of his satisfaction later at being able to speak of *Der Rosenkavalier* as "das Existierende," at being able to say, "It is almost disturbing . . . to think how people could once be shocked or put off by this or that detail of that light comedy, that casually painted picture, which has now received a certain harmony and tranquillity from being looked at by so many eyes" (W23 548; P4 426–7). Even Strauss's orchestral swamping of the text's delicate linguistic differentiatedness, for which Hofmannsthal never really forgave him,[3] does not (I think) bother us any more. The work exists as its recurring performances; and part of what we contribute to this communal phenomenon is our knowledge of the text, so that even what we cannot actually hear is still somehow present for us in the opera-house. The combination of just this music with just this language is something we grow up with; the original tension between them is no more worrisome than the fact that almonds and trout do not grow on the same tree.

The importance of such an art form for Hofmannsthal has to do not only with the project of throwing the theater open to society, but also with the idea, in "Der Dichter und diese Zeit," of the poet

as his culture's true shaper. The trouble with this idea is that there is no way of ascertaining its truth with regard to one's own works. Centuries are ordinarily required for the realization of artistic meaning as cultural legislation – except in the case of those art forms in which the meaning is not ideally included but belongs to a tradition of performance that may arise in a relatively short time. And for Hofmannsthal, after 1906 or so – his self-confidence now linked to the homecomer's experience of the usefulness of intellectual art for social existence – some direct evidence of his own cultural function is necessary. Hence his openness to performance-bound forms, and especially to the idea of collaboration, with Strauss, with Reinhardt, with Kessler.

2

But is there not an inconsistency in the idea of a poet's attempting to experience his rôle as a cultural leader by adopting art forms that allow the culture at large to exercise an especially strong influence on the meaning of his work? Can one be a leader by being a follower? The paradoxical situation of being at once creator and creature in one's language is metaphysically given, for the poet as for anyone else. But can this situation be deliberately cultivated? Hofmannsthal himself was not immune to doubts. In the *Buch der Freunde* Rudolf Pannwitz is quoted to the effect that "Philosophy is the judge of its age; things are bad when it becomes the expression of its age" (A 42). And in 1916, the year of the unsent letter to Strauss, and of the Scandinavian notes, which are an attempt to regain metaphysical elevation in thought, Hofmannsthal also attacks his old collaborator Kessler for "his eternal understanding, his indiscriminate intimacy" toward contemporary cultural life.[4] But perhaps he himself is guilty of what he attacks. By comparison with "Der Dichter und diese Zeit," which is lucid in development and structure, his speech of about twenty years later (after the main collaborating period) on a related topic, "Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation," is opaque and confused, giving the impression of an individual who has compromised himself seriously, as Hofmannsthal in fact had, most recently in his Reinhardtian revision of *Der Turm*.[5]

Without tradition there is no poetry. Only the relation to earlier poetry makes a text recognizable as poetry in the first place, even if the relation is presented as primarily negative. Hofmannsthal did not have to be told this. In all his works we recognize that the

process of creation or expression is essentially one of transmission. Even where we cannot say exactly what is being transmitted, this sense arises from a characteristic core of meaning: the idea that our everyday reality is in truth a creative act, the product of a titanic internal tension in the individual, which implies that the task of a poetic work is conservative, not to wrench reality apart expressionistically but to uphold reality and render it translucent to its own true nature as poetry, as an allegory of poetic tradition, as itself the medium of existing poetic acts that are not given us except as the reason and energy[6] of an activity now wholly our own. This is the character of all Hofmannsthal's writing. And was it really necessary, then, to carry this traditionalness to an extreme by attempting, in *Jedermann*, "to let be without mixing in, to refurbish without personal freedom" (P3 117)? There are changes in Hofmannsthal's version, but are they the right ones? The text is nothing but an excuse for its performance, as is made clear in "Das alte Spiel von Jedermann," and the personal signature, the core of meaning that justifies and transfigures the tradition, is largely excluded.

Or again, was it necessary to collaborate with Strauss, of all people? "Everything he says and wishes and tends toward runs rather strongly against my taste" (H/HK, p. 244), says Hofmannsthal of the composer in 1909; and in 1914 he still wishes he had a composer who would be "less famous but closer to me in feeling and in manner of thinking" (H/EvB, p. 167). Perhaps he sees his relation to Strauss as a salutary trial, a model of his whole relation to contemporary culture, an opportunity to work out on a small scale the paradox of being at once a leader and a follower; this idea fits neatly with Jakob Knaus' argument on the progression from *Der Rosenkavalier* through *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.[7] In any event, Hofmannsthal's aim does seem to have been to throw himself open to the cultural process at large. In the "Ungeschriebenes Nachwort zum 'Rosenkavalier'" we read: "A work is a whole [ein Ganzes] and even the work of two people can become a whole. People who live at the same time have much in common, even of that which is most their own. Threads run back and forth; related elements combine" (W23 547; P3 43). Hofmannsthal and Strauss, however, had practically nothing in common *except* their contemporaneity; "ein Ganzes" born of their union would therefore almost necessarily be a child of the *Zeitgeist* itself. But was such a project necessary? Up to a point we can justify it from Hofmannsthal's perspective by the idea of chance (or contingency), or the

idea of overcoming the crisis of intellectual poetry by a recognition of its social function (the homecomer), a recognition that the poet can achieve only by somehow occupying the position of a recipient of his own work. But were these relatively abstruse considerations enough to outweigh Hofmannsthal's deep incompatibility with Strauss?[8]

3

It seems to me that Hofmannsthal's acceptance and maintenance of the relation with Strauss is proof of the sincerity, the unsullied altruistic depth, of his sense of cultural responsibility. At least from the first decade of the new century – and in my opinion, from a good deal earlier – Hofmannsthal understands his task as that of a *teacher*, not in the vatic sense but as the task of understanding in detail what his contemporaries actually *need* from him and how best to supply it. This didactic tendency appears especially in his endless attempts to interpret his own career as a kind of doctrine, and his encouragement of such attempts by others.[9] Or we think of his participation in the plan to found an actual school, or of his wartime essays, or his Salzburg plans, his involvement with various periodicals, the attempt at a kind of *Bildungsroman*;[10] we think of *Jedermann*, as a dramatized lesson in cultural continuity. Even the "aestheticism" of the early works belongs to this side of Hofmannsthal. For form is taken there not merely as an object of enjoyment, but as mankind's true duty with respect to existence; and the idea of an establishment of valid intellectual form in the human world (the word *Bildung* says it) contains the idea of education.

However dubious some of his didactic efforts may be, the collaboration with Strauss demonstrates Hofmannsthal's educative honesty. For in throwing his work open to the influence of a cultural situation with which he was personally not comfortable, he makes the sacrifice of the true teacher, the sacrifice of his belief in the necessity and integrity of his own thought as a system, and of his belief in the validity of his own existence as a model. The teacher may not stand aloof; he must maintain contact with his community – with the real community, not an ideal image of it – even if it means allowing his own most precious thoughts to be sullied or confused. As Hans Karl is to Furlani, so Hofmannsthal, in this sense, is to Hans Karl. He sees in Hans Karl, self-parodistically but also admiringly, his own bumbling but existentially crucial

acceptance of the confusion of purposes in his community, to the exclusion of any purposes of his own.

The idea of the poet as educator is already a component of the Chandos crisis, in the idea of the poet as an individual tragically committed to the hopeless task of establishing intellectual order in reality. And it is by a re-examination of this idea that Hofmannsthal then to an extent rescues himself from the crisis. The poet who thinks of himself as a teacher has a natural tendency toward intellectual existence; but the committed intellectual is no longer truly a teacher, for in his insistence on order he loses contact with the actual community of imperfect people that must be educated. The poet as teacher must therefore be two people at once ("marching separately"), still a leader, but also a follower in receiving and dealing with other people as they actually are. He must be an ironic educator, who teaches others by way of what *they* say and think, like that Socrates who already figures in the background of the "Brief."

What Hofmannsthal calls his "third period, in which the fulfilment of traditional theatrical demands becomes a clear goal, from about 1907 on" (A 370), is therefore characterized at first by a cultivation of openness and a relaxation of tragic severity. The accidental, "Tyche," is important as a theme from the beginning, and in *Theater in Versen* an attempt is made to allow for accident in the composition of the audience. But after 1907, especially in the Strauss collaborations, an accidental or contingent element is admitted into the work's very genesis. That this strategy actually serves a didactic end, as a following in order to lead, is clear from the direction taken by the initial phase of the poetic–musical partnership – under Hofmannsthal's guidance, it must be remembered, since it is he who suggests each new project. First *Der Rosenkavalier*, "a Viennese masquerade and nothing more" (W23 93; LI 385), insisting on the quality of lightness. Then *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which the idea of art by accident is itself dramatized as the setting for a lesson on the relation of the ideal and the real in life. And finally *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, which dispenses with the irony of an opera about the making of opera, or an opera in which a central rôle is transvestite to the second power, and in its relative directness focusses strongly on the *fabula docet* concerning how one becomes truly human.

Even in the development of the Florindo–Cristina material, which is also for a time considered as an operatic subject, we find the same unveiling of the didactic in a construct apparently

focussed solely upon its own accidental or ephemeral quality. The figure of Casanova/Florindo is never heroically magnified; he has nothing of, say, da Ponte's Don Giovanni. But for just this reason, he seems to offer the opportunity for developing a theater that produces serious meaning even from its character as mere interlude. The situation is soon complicated, however, by the figure of Tomaso, who has a lightness of his own, a cheerful fatalism which, precisely by representing a similarity to Florindo, produces a moral tension, a temptation to teach, with which the comic structure is not comfortable. Tomaso's exclamation to Florindo, "Herr, Sie sind des Teufels, Herr. Das ist es, was Sie sind" (LI 425), cloaks its serious moral judgment in a harmless idiom – literally, "you belong to the devil," meaning ordinarily, "you must be mad." But the judgment as such is still more or less confirmed by the echoes of Florindo in Ochs's boasting, and by the figure of Neuhoff, who was to have been called "Neuhaus," thus Casanova.[11]

4

Contingent art, or art by accident, especially in musical drama, is for the poet a precarious undertaking (H/RB, p. 87), not only because of the submission of the work's meaning to uncontrollable forces, but also because the same didactic tendency that prompts it threatens to disrupt the necessary delicacy, the engaging but significant superficiality of the product. If the connection suggested by Hofmannsthal between *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Jedermann* really exists, if the letter from Borchardt of July 1911 on *Der Rosenkavalier* really helped Hofmannsthal in completing *Jedermann* (H/RB, pp. 46–7; P3 117–19), then *Jedermann* shows precisely the didactic asphyxiation of the opera's delicate theatrical synthesis of the popular and the profound.

Der Rosenkavalier, in fact, is *nothing but* a vehicle for art by accident. This hugely popular work, which started as a collaboration with Kessler and later became a collaboration with Strauss, was for Hofmannsthal a technical experiment. The culturally open form is not yet used for a particular purpose, but is simply permitted to unfold its possibilities, especially by way of Oktavian, who occupies the structural center.

The Marschallin is not there only for herself, nor is Ochs. They stand opposed to each other and still belong to each other, and the boy Oktavian is between them and connects them. Sophie stands over against the

Marschallin, as girl to woman, and again Oktavian steps between and separates them and holds them together. (W23 547; P3 43)

To this could be added that Oktavian is both a real intermediary, as rose-bearer, and a symbolic mean, as hermaphrodite, between Ochs and Sophie, so that the main characters form a triangle, Marschallin–Ochs–Sophie, between each pair of which Oktavian holds the center.

But Oktavian is a woman dressed as a man who then twice dresses as a woman, and this complication is a feature of the work's earliest conception (H/RS, p. 54). Without the artificiality, the sexlessness of Oktavian, the work would be unstageable before an audience in the culture for which it is written. The love-duets Oktavian–Marschallin and Oktavian–Sophie are thoroughly sensual, yet sufficiently attenuated by the music, and by our willingness to accept affectionate demonstrations between women, to be performed by singers of the same sex. But the gross sexuality of Ochs's advances upon Mariandel would involve uncomfortable homosexual suggestions if Mariandel were not really a woman. I do not mean that such suggestions belong to the work; my point is that precisely our recognition of their *absence* (since they would be there in the text alone) shows that for us the work *exists only as performance*. The complex artificiality of the figure of Oktavian, in thus supporting the very existence of the work, lends immediacy, for us in the audience, to the idea of "a Viennese masquerade and nothing more." When, toward the end, we hear the words repeated, "mit dieser Stund' vorbei" (W23 94; L1 387), we recognize that they apply directly to our situation in the theater. The work *does* "pass away with the passing hour"; it simply does not exist except here and now, in the theater, and for the specific type of audience we are.

The sentimentality of the plot is thus raised to a higher level. The pervasive artificiality of the proceeding takes the edge off our emotional participation in the fiction, while the feeling of transience or loss at the end is still made directly available to us in the form of a knowledge that the work itself will in a strong sense stop existing when the performance is over. The feeling of loss is dominant even *within* the work at the end, despite the union of Sophie and Oktavian; for this union does not suggest the comic vision of a permanently resolved world-order. "Oktavian draws Sophie over to himself – but does he really do so, and for good? That perhaps remains doubtful" (W23 547; P3 44). The relation between Oktavian and Sophie, the love of two sopranos, is markedly insubstantial by comparison with the sexually powerful char-

acters of Ochs and the Marschallin. And when Faninal says at the end, "Sein schon aso, die jungen Leut!" (W23 101; L1 396), these words evoke not young love so much as the whole melancholy experience of passing time. The final soprano duet gives the impression of something seen through a gauze curtain, in an irretrievable past, which feeling merges with the feeling that the work, the whole work, the whole vision, is now also slipping into just the sort of past that it nostalgically depicts.

Der Rosenkavalier has no meaning whatever, in the sense of meaning as worked out above in Hofmannsthal's poems and other plays.[12] It holds nothing fast. It opens among us like a huge flower, receives from us a certain emotional investment, and with the cessation of its music, here and now, is gone. Participation in the sentimental or nostalgic mood is made available to us, but only by way of our awareness of the work's artificiality and our critical understanding of its consequences, of the work's non-existence beyond this performance. Our state of mind is thus perhaps an elevated sentimentality that includes dispassionate consciousness and control; and this is precisely the state of experiencing time most intensely, a state of affectionate attachment to what we know cannot last. This particular opera, then, contrives to *be* practically nothing but the passing of time, not the passing of a particular age or social order or atmosphere, but the passing of our time, as we sit listening to it, and listening to it finish. And nothing like the complexity of *Der Schwierige* is needed for this effect: only the central placing of Oktavian, an entirely straightforward development of the theme of time, and the leaving of that "room for music" (W23 547; P3 44) which, in being filled, anchors the whole proceeding in our present, a transitory present that takes its character from ours.

Or perhaps the didactic is not missing entirely. By building its sentimentality on an intellectual basis, on our understanding that the process we are involved in is artificial, that it belongs to culture, not nature, *Der Rosenkavalier* perhaps teaches that our emotional life is not prior to our cultural existence but derived from it, as *Der Schwierige* teaches that all genuine human contact is derived from the prior assertion of particular social forms as a symbol of human being. The individual's typical sense of emotional entrapment in his culture is futile and misguided. "One must be light," in the knowledge that everything in the world has "sein' Zeit und sein Gesetzl" (W23 39; L1 305). One must take oneself seriously, as the Marschallin does, but only in taking oneself as a symbolic function,

as the playing of a rôle. If *Der Schwierige* aims at a revitalization of manners, or *Cristinas Heimreise* at a revitalization of morality, then *Der Rosenkavalier* perhaps aims at a revitalization of the emotions as the cultural phenomena they truly are, existing in the same way as the opera itself, as a sort of tradition of performance, always transient but still in a sense permanent, provided we continue to do our part "as social persons" (H/RB, p. 47; P3 118) in the communal entity to which they belong.

The question of the extent to which this didactic element is actually present in *Der Rosenkavalier* is idle. It is certainly not insisted upon. But its bare possibility as a reading indicates that even the "light" attitude of this Viennese masquerade, even this throwing open of the theater to accident, to uncontrollable cultural forces, to the passing of *our* time, is an initiative that has didactic potential.

5

Emil Staiger, in his essay on *Der Rosenkavalier*, says that while the "magical atmosphere" of Hofmannsthal's early lyrical works diminishes in the development of a stricter dramatic order, still "just this magical atmosphere is now brought back by music."[13] Things will perhaps not seem so simple to us. The "lyrical" and the "magical" are more than mere "atmosphere." The conservative strain in Hofmannsthal's later work, the focus on "feste Zusammenhänge," the aim of revitalization, not revolution, is also present in the early works; the "magical" is not an escape from reality or an attempt to transform it, but a revelation of its true nature. Yet Staiger is not simply wrong; Hofmannsthal himself does not distinguish strictly between the two meanings of the word "lyrical," as applied to his early poetry and to his later writing for music.[14] What Staiger says has validity, but the precise extent of its validity requires discussion.

In the late dialogue-essay on *Die ägyptische Helena* Hofmannsthal argues that there is not enough room "in 'natural' dialogue" for a modern poet to operate. "The 'natural' is the projection of ungraspable life upon a very arbitrarily chosen social plane. The maximum of our cosmically moved human nature, which encompasses all times and places, cannot be captured by naturalness" (P4 459). We seem to hear almost a repudiation of *Der Schwierige*, of the use of society itself, in all its "very arbitrary" particularity, as a symbol of universal human nature. And this impression is strength-

ened by the reasons then given for preferring "lyrical drama," which means here musical drama, to the drama of psychological dialogue:

> the artistic devices of lyrical drama ... seem to me alone capable of expressing the atmosphere of the present time. For this present is nothing if not mythical – I know of no other expression for an existence that is enacted before such huge horizons – for this being-surrounded by millennia, for this flood of orient and occident into our ego, for this enormous inner breadth, these crazed inner tensions, this Here and Elsewhere which is the signature of our life. It is not possible to capture this in bourgeois dialogues. Let us make mythological operas; that is the truest of all forms. (P4 459–60)

It seems that Hofmannsthal now allows himself to be convinced (as if by his own Neuhoff) that "the present" is a uniquely intellectual age, in which the forms of a particular society can no longer be valid, in which life must be experienced as "intellectual crisis," in which we all undergo directly, like it or not, the infinite inner tensions of human being.

But this type of thinking is not new for Hofmannsthal in the twenties. One of the reasons for the delay between the Chandos letter and *Der Schwierige* is Hofmannsthal's occupation with the idea of a peculiarly intellectual or non-social "present." In "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" we read that one of the secret keys to the "form of our time" is that "everything is simultaneously there and not there." Everything is present, in the sense that the totality of human being impinges upon us constantly; but nothing is really *there* because there is no valid external order, no true society, by which our overwhelming existence is gathered into a symbol, because "nothing that has real power over men expresses itself outwardly, in metaphor, but rather everything is drawn into our inwardness" (P2 232).

And in an age that has this character, lyrical drama in the sense of Part I above, as a metaphysical exercise, becomes practically identical with musical or contingent drama. The device of allowing contemporary culture to exercise an uncontrolled influence on the work's meaning now *automatically* makes the work a metaphysical exercise, since the "signature" of the age is precisely a direct exposure to human being in its metaphysical dimensions. In this sense Staiger's assertion holds, at least as regards Hofmannsthal's own view of the significance of musical drama in his development. An earlier turn away from the lyrical, toward the mimetic, in *Theater in Versen*, is now reversed in the collaboration with Strauss;

in the light of a particular view of "the present," the concept of the "lyrical" expands to include both the magical–metaphysical and the musical forms of drama. It is true, despite the context of Staiger's remark, that the opera in which this new avenue of metaphysical expression is least developed, is *Der Rosenkavalier*. But the metaphysical, along with its natural didactic component, is waiting impatiently in the wings.

These thoughts are not difficult, but they create a difficulty in understanding Hofmannsthal's development. Must we see that development as a series of violent self-reversals? An initial lyrical–magical period followed by a turn toward the mimetic, followed then by a return to the metaphysical, but now along a collaborative path that involves certain assumptions about the specific character of modern culture, whereupon these assumptions are themselves repudiated in *Der Schwierige*, in the rejection of Neuhoff, but are later dusted off again for the sake of "mythological" opera? And where shall we fit Chandos and the tragedies in this scheme?

In order to explain Hofmannsthal's reversals with respect to the idea of the intellectualized quality of modern culture, we must return to Scylla and Charybdis, to the idea of a distribution of social functions among dramatic types. In order to complete *Der Schwierige*, Hofmannsthal has to recognize that comedy, at least in his own practice, is a response primarily to the social danger of petrifaction, not to that of fragmentation. In the immediate post-Chandos period, the tragic theater of naked truth had appeared to him the natural artistic response to such rigidity, whereas comedy must knit society together, preventing intellectual fragmentation. Curiously enough, the refinement of his thinking on this point was perhaps unwittingly initiated by Strauss. For Strauss opened their collaboration by using *Elektra* as the text for an opera, with the result that Hofmannsthal soon saw his own tragedy of naked truth transformed into art by accident – indeed, art doubly by accident, since the text had not been intended for operatic use. But art by accident, especially musical drama, is by nature directed against the danger of fragmentation, not that of rigidity. In the accidental or musical theater it is our own cultural dynamics, our social existence, thus our very selves, that appears relatively un-edited on the stage and is there *resolved into form*.[15] For a short while the anxiety of the intellect, that fear of the formless which itself causes us to lose hold of the forms that are available to us, is relieved, and the danger of fragmentation is averted.

In the opera *Elektra* Hofmannsthal sees his own tragic initiative

against social rigidity transformed into a defense against fragmentation. The distribution of functions between tragic and comic genres therefore becomes problematic for him. He undertakes the collaboration with Strauss, and in the course of it experiments with tragic possibilities, while at the same time, correspondingly, his comedy *Der Schwierige* adapts itself to the task of reproblematizing our social existence, of resisting a petrifaction of manners. "After an unfortunate war comedies have to be written" (P4 40), he quotes in 1921,[16] on the subject of "Die Ironie der Dinge"; and he means that comedy must combat not simply the unhappy self-irony that follows defeat, not irony as such, but rather the degeneration of irony into mere habit (as Hans Karl's "difficulty" threatens to become habit), the petrifaction of irony, its loss as a vital social force. It does not follow, however, that the comic preservation of irony must then be the poet's only task. With an eye especially to the idea of "Europe," Hofmannsthal also continues his campaign against social fragmentation, in musical and festival plays, in "mythological opera," in a new type of tragedy, and shows no inconsistency or vacillation in doing so. It is simply a matter of using different tools for different tasks.

6

Der Rosenkavalier, then, is mainly an exploration of formal possibilities in opera, with philosophical implications but as yet little suggestion of the tragic or didactic. *Ariadne auf Naxos* is a different matter, already a kind of "mythological opera." The original plan to attach it to a version of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* was meant, I suppose, to keep the work in the vicinity of the social and the traditionally comic; but the plan was not successful, and the revised version with "Vorspiel" is focussed strongly on its mythic climax. The assumption, however, that our age actually has the intellectually exposed character that requires mythological opera, becomes curiously irrelevant as the work develops. For *Ariadne* is basically *Der Rosenkavalier* holding a mirror up to itself. Whereas in *Der Rosenkavalier* an understanding of the contingency and transitoriness of the art-form is simply presupposed, simply expected from the audience, this understanding is thematized and enacted in *Ariadne*. (In the first version, not only the people who make the opera but the spectators as well, represented by M. Jourdain and his guests, appear on stage.) The accidental is so thoroughly involved in the artistic structure that it perhaps alto-

gether ceases to be accidental; or in the idiom of *Der Schwierige*, chance is completely transformed into necessity.

This transformation is of the essence in *Ariadne*, and is meant to effect a transformation of the operatic stage. The thematization of the art form's contingency is aimed at overcoming that contingency. It remains true that musical theater is by nature performance-bound, thus basically contingent, in the same way that it remains true that Ariadne's union with Bacchus is in one aspect merely a case of "Kommt der neue Gott gegangen" (W24 47; L3 65), an extravagant woman's attribution of godlikeness to whoever her new lover happens to be.[17] But our direct confrontation with the work's uncomfortable contingency, like Ariadne's confrontation with Zerbinetta, also establishes a *distance* from it. As the music teacher says to the prima donna concerning Zerbinetta's inclusion in the *opera seria*, "Where would you have a better opportunity than on the stage, to show her what an immeasurable distance is established [befestigt] between you!" (W24 24; L3 32).

We are fully aware of both the prima donna's sexuality (her count, Zerbinetta's army officer) and her pettiness, hence also of the music teacher's insincerity. But his words, "Where would you have a better opportunity ..." nevertheless contain an essential part of the work's meaning. If *Der Rosenkavalier* is a dramatization of the audience's emotional life, *Ariadne* dramatizes the thinking mind; its effect is to make us aware, as we sit in the theater, of *our* status as conscious individuals, of the formative and transformative power of *our* consciousness, our transformation of primal chaos into valid order as symbolized by our mental transformation into significant symbolism of an art form that otherwise has the quality (here thematized) of vanishing as soon as it comes fully into being.[18] The curious use of the verb "befestigen" by the music teacher may have been suggested by the Lord's charge to the archangels in *Faust*: "Und was in schwankender Erscheinung schwebt, / Befestiget mit dauernden Gedanken" (*Faust*, 348–9); the world must be "fastened down" in thought. Or we think of what Death tells Claudio about intellect and the aboriginal "chaos of dead things."

Ariadne, like *Jedermann*, is thus essentially a rewriting of *Der Tor und der Tod*; not only the didactic content but also the basic action is the same, confrontation with a god of death who turns out to be a god of life. And we have seen that a dramatizing of the audience's thinking is crucial in the earlier play, the establishment of Death as a hallucination on the part of the spectator. In the case of *Ariadne*,

then, the lyrical–musical theater – the theater of art by accident, but here accident in the sense of a chaos that must be regulated by consciousness (and only *our* consciousness, here and now, is available for the task) – practically merges with the earlier lyrical–magical theater in its quality as metaphysical exercise.

The figure of Bacchus, moreover, suggests a Nietzschean idea of tragedy, and the opera's two levels of action, corresponding to the ideas of dialogue and chorus, support this suggestion, especially when we think of the satyr-like "goat-leaps" (W24 25; L3 33) of the *commedia dell'arte* figures.[19] Nietzsche says:

> Enchantment is the presupposition of all dramatic art. In this enchantment the Dionysian enthusiast sees himself [sieht sich] as a satyr, *and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god*; that is, he sees in his transformation [Verwandlung] a new vision outside of himself, as the Apollonian completion of his state.[20]

The transformation of spectator into satyr is suggested by the very nature of musical drama considered as art by accident. The effect of the uncompromisingly transient nature of the artistic proceeding, in which the work fails to exist outside of its performance, is to expose *us* helplessly to the passing of time, thus to place us on the level of Zerbinetta and her admirers, satyr-like creatures for whom "Verwandlung" is no problem since they are not hampered by the stable dignity of the self. (This sense of community with the burlesque group is confirmed by our recognition that Zerbinetta's comments on the other characters are irrefutable, that the idealism of the *opera seria* figures, including the Composer, is more pretence than substance.) But at the same time, our distanced awareness of this helpless exposure to transience, our acknowledgment of it, which testifies to the thinking individuality that we cannot cease to experience even in this theater, also fastens down in thought ("befestigt"), thus *overcomes* the transitoriness of the situation, and so generates, as a metaphor for such overcoming, the vision of the young god who has just overcome chaos in the person of form-destroying Circe. The Dionysian state, the utterly transitory, thus utterly unindividualized "Zustand" of musical theater, by being held up to itself as a mirror, becomes individuality (Apollonian completion) or form as such, divine humanity as represented by the god Dionysus. The whole of the Nietzschean tragic process is mirrored or parodied in *Ariadne*: the transformation of audience into satyr-chorus, which transformation, by way of a mirroring ("sieht sich"), results in a visionary reestablishment of individuality.[21] By combining the musical and the metaphysical, *Ariadne* thus

engages Hofmannsthal's unfinished business in the matter of the tragic, and so again tends to associate the tragic with a theatrical defense against social fragmentation.

But is the transformation of the operatic stage, the realization of its helpless contingency as a higher necessity, an actual *process* in which we are involved, here and now, in the theater? Or is it simply a *fact*? Is the contingent quality of opera in *Ariadne* not made so completely into an object of our consciousness that it ceases altogether to affect us as a component of our immediate experience? This question, though strictly unanswerable, uncovers a problem, the need for *restraint* in the shaping of a work like *Ariadne*; the work's structure, its quality as a mirror held up to itself and its audience, can be perfected to the point where its perfection becomes self-defeating. This consideration, I think, accounts for the decision to let drop the further complication of an audience-frame such as would have been provided by *Der Bürger als Edelmann*. And in the final version it is interesting that the absence of a *closing* frame-section, the conclusion of the work as a whole at the point where the inner opera concludes, shows exactly the same technique that had been used in the poem "Terzinen II," and with almost exactly the same effect. On one hand, the unclosed frame suggests the *completeness* of the transformation of chance into necessity, the complete leaving-behind of the confusion out of which the inner opera had been born. But on the other hand, as in the "Terzinen," it also suggests forgetfulness, the passing of time, "Vergänglichkeit," the impossibility of fastening down experience in thought, hence the transitory, accidental quality of the work in its dependence on theatrical realization, precisely the quality, in *our* experience, that must undergo transformation.

7

Like all Hofmannsthal's major works, then, *Ariadne* is as much a problem as an achievement, and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* seeks accordingly to realize the possibilities of musical drama in a different direction. Its genesis overlaps with especially the second version of *Ariadne*, and it is also a "mythological opera," though its myth is not in the same degree an established one. But in "Ad me ipsum," which records Hofmannsthal's thinking at about this period, we read, "'Die Frau ohne Schatten': Triumph des Allomatischen. Allegorie des Sozialen" (A 218); and even without a full understanding of the "allomatic" it is clear that the emphasis here is

different from that in *Ariadne*. If *Der Rosenkavalier* is an experiment in art by accident, and if *Ariadne* is the attempt to exploit such art in establishing a new theatrical and educative basis for the metaphysical exercise that had been typical of the early poems and plays, then *Die Frau ohne Schatten* is an acknowledgment – anticipated as early as *Theater in Versen* – that the proper domain of the accidental is not metaphysical truth, but social reality.

The idea of an "allegory of the social," moreover, given Hofmannsthal's sense of the social itself as a kind of allegory, suggests a situation similar to that in *Der Schwierige*, the structure of a symbol within a symbol, meant to lend new vitality to the established symbolism of society at large. I think the relation between *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Der Schwierige* is given by the distribution of poetic functions discussed above. Whereas *Der Schwierige* shows the understanding that comedy is properly employed in problematizing the social, defending society against its tendency to petrify, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* marks a recognition of the usefulness of musical drama as a defense against the intellectual fragmentation of society. If *Der Schwierige* encourages an infinitely complex critical and self-critical elaboration of our social existence, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* insists didactically upon our simple commitment to the social, the model for which is our situation in the theater (considered as a commitment to the contingent quality of the proceeding there), and the symbolic seal upon which is not the conscious and artificial institution of marriage, but a submission to the natural process of reproduction, to the succession of generations.

It is therefore questionable whether "the social" means the same thing in relation to *Der Schwierige* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In view of Hofmannsthal's development as a whole, it appears that the true object of the commitment symbolized by our situation in the musical theater is not society in the sense of *Der Schwierige* so much as culture, the long path of tradition (corresponding to the succession of generations), the large vision of European culture that produces the festival plays. *Die Frau ohne Schatten* is not obviously close in spirit to *Jedermann*; but its affinity with a work yet to be written, *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*, is very strong. Like the soul of the Beggar, the Kaiserin appears as a creature of not yet realized humanity, who must achieve realization by a decision; and like the Beggar in his earthly existence, the Kaiserin must affirm her humanity by refusing to carry out an action that seems only a natural consequence of what she has done and been already: "Ich – will – nicht!" (D3 237).

Die Frau ohne Schatten, then, is a tentative and transitional work; but from the point of view of musical theater it is also a summation. What Hofmannsthal saw as the specially intellectual temper of his age finds its way automatically into the musical theater, because of that theater's contingent quality, its openness to actual communal conditions; and in *Ariadne*, this supposedly automatic intellectuality is used as the basis for an exercise approaching the Nietzschean model of tragedy. But from the point of view of actual society, the intellectual pretensions of the age are a danger, the danger of fragmentation. This danger does not principally concern *Der Schwierige*, where Neuhoff and the professor are a paradoxical confirmation of the social, not a threat to it; but it *is* directly encountered as a danger (in part by way of the easy but useful ambiguity of the word "Geist") in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. This opera draws a logical conclusion from its own form, as musical drama, in that the simply and socially human quality of its main figures, especially the women, insists upon itself in defiance of the attractive "spirit" world, which I take to be an allegory of the temptations of intellect ("Geist"). To succumb to these temptations, to accept the "spirit" world, would be essentially to withdraw into the speculative complications of individual self-consciousness, thus to repudiate (self-contradictorily) the incalculable collective forces, the social, the cultural, the generational, to which precisely this musical theater owes its existence, and which assert their rightful place in the "Voices of the Unborn." The story of the Kaiserin is thus not only a "real" answer to Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, where the Daughter of Indra returns eventually to her spirit home, but also an allegory of the poet's situation. Like the Kaiserin, the poet is trapped in the real world, in "existence," and has left behind the sheer magic of "pre-existence" or perfect self-transforming freedom; like the Kaiserin, he falls in love with this real world, desires to bind himself to it once and for all, and is offered the opportunity to do so by depriving another person of that same bond, by stealing a shadow – which, in the poet's case, I take to mean: by propagating a speculative metaphysical vision that offers *us* the illusion of a direct experience of our infinite being, our absolute freedom. (The poet is to the spectator as the Kaiserin is to Barak's wife; by liberating *us* from our finitude, by stealing our shadow, offering us access to the spirit, he has the opportunity to achieve an effective finite existence for *himself*.) Like the Kaiserin, however, the poet says, "I – will – not!" and decides (in logical conformity with his own endeavor) for the *teaching* of earthly commitment.

14

THE ALLOMATIC

Before we go on to the festival plays and the final phase of Hofmannsthal's career, we need to anticipate some of the problems we will encounter, and some complications that arise from problems already discussed. The concept of the "allomatic" is useful for this purpose. Especially the problem of truth, and of the speaking or formulation of truth – which arises with the metaphysical aspect of the operas considered as a renewal of "lyric" – will occupy our attention, as will the novel *Andreas*, which otherwise escapes our focus upon the dramatic.

I

Although the word "allomatisch" occurs only five times in as much of Hofmannsthal as has yet been published, twice close together in "Ad me ipsum" (A 218), twice in the notes to *Andreas* (W30 102, 105; E 243), and once in connection with another narrative project (W29 195), the concept has attracted a good deal of critical attention.[1] But Hofmannsthal never actually defines the word, and critics tend to use it rather freely, in support of this or that argument from which they derive a tailor-made definition. The concept is too important to be treated in this manner.

Manfred Pape has shown that Hofmannsthal's source for the word "allomatic" is a curious Rosicrucian–alchemical book by Ferdinand Maack entitled *Zweimal gestorben!* (1912).[2] But in his discussion of this source, Pape begins with an assumption that he ought by rights to be testing, that the allomatic is principally a force acting *upon the individual*, that the individual stands in a passive relation to it, that it is definable as "being transformed *by* another" (Pape, p. 680). There is a logical difficulty in Maack that Pape does not clear up, but that it seems to me Hofmannsthal does. Maack says, with reckless disregard for Greek etymology:

Among atoms there are no "automes" (autos = self); *there are only "allomes"* (allos = the other). Whatever a so-called Self possesses, it owes to something Other. Everything comes from outside in the final analysis.
(Maack, pp. 14–15)

For the author of "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" ("draußen sind wir zu finden" [P2 83]) and the future author of *Der Schwierige* (idea of the self as "zufällig"), this must have been suggestive reading; and Hofmannsthal's frequent use of the shortened name "Andres" suggests the idea of Andreas as a person *composed* of "other things." But Maack's presentation is logically unsound; for in the very process of asserting the non-existence of the self, he constantly *locates* the self as a focus of external influences, as the "transitory accumulator, condenser, place of utilization" for what he imagines as "*psychic rays*" (Maack, p. 26) streaming through the universe like electromagnetic energy. All this streaming is seen from the point where it arrives, and that point, the experiencing ego, the self, is thus willy-nilly insisted upon.

It is true that in the marginal notes quoted by Pape, Hofmannsthal follows Maack in imagining the self as a "place" where things arrive from without, and that he associates the "allomatic" with external "influences" (Pape, p. 686). But I contend that he is not blind to the logical complexities of the thought, and that he in the end develops the idea of the allomatic to a point where it means something quite different. In any case, "allomatic" must not be taken to mean "occurring because of *another's* influence."[3] This definition goes even beyond Maack in illogicality, by attributing an active effectiveness to *other* human subjects, only not to oneself. Maack at least insists on the idea of "the '*golden chain of Homer*' (aurea catena Homeri) or the '*ring of Plato*' (annulus Platonis)" (Maack, p. 11; cf. W30 103), the idea of a *universal* interactivity ascribable to no individual, "a Something *common* to all things" (Maack, p. 12) that organizes the world. And we must therefore be careful in interpreting, for example, the "Ad me ipsum" note referring to *Ariadne*:

Der schicksalvolle Bräutigam: Bacchus. Kreuzung mythischer Motive. Die gegenseitige Verwandlung. Das allomatische Element.
(W24 226; A 218)

The fateful bridegroom: Bacchus. Crossing of mythical motifs. Mutual transformation. The allomatic element.

It is wrong to read over the absent verbs here and arrive, with Alewyn, at the idea of an "ethical process of mutual transformation

that Hofmannsthal . . . called *the allomatic solution.*"[4] If "mutual" and "allomatic" mean practically the same thing, then why is a new concept necessary, how is the thought different from that of *Der Tor und der Tod*, "We bind and are bound"? It is clear from the argument of Part II above that Hofmannsthal must have been struck by Maack's assertion:

> Die Konsequenzen unseres allomatischen Prinzips sind ungeheuer, ja ungeheuerlich. Sie führen zur *radikalen Auflösung des Subjekts.*
>
> (Maack, p. 27)

> The consequences of our allomatic principle are enormous, yes monstrous. They lead to the *radical dissolution of the subject.*

Are we to assume that Hofmannsthal immediately trivializes this thought by interpreting it to refer to mutuality among subjects, to intersubjectivity?

I do not mean that Hofmannsthal's thought is dependent on Maack's. Hofmannsthal has the *word* "allomatic" from Maack, but the word brings with it other associations, especially its relation to its contrary, "automatic"; and it happens that the automatic, in ancient and modern usage, is often defined negatively, by the word ἄνευ ("without"), for example, in passages from Euripides and Plato that Hofmannsthal is likely to have known, where "automatic" means "without the agency of a mortal hand" and "without thought or intention."[5] And this sense of the word is borne out by the use of "automatic" and "automatism" in a book Hofmannsthal uses constantly in planning *Andreas*, Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality.*[6] The technical concept of automatism is discussed repeatedly by Prince, automatic phenomena are described by the dozens, and I think it is unlikely that the idea of the allomatic is not affected. But in Prince the automatic is defined as what happens "outside the will" or "independently of personal control" (pp. 61, 85) with respect to the individual involved. What this definition negates is thus the same as what is negated in Euripides and Plato, the idea of *conscious thought and intent leading to explainable action.*

The non-automatic, then, differs from its opposite in the direction of the *active.* The automatic refers to what is *done*, but without being a person's conscious *deed*, to the opposite of conscious personal activity. In Prince the passivity of the automatic state is emphasized; automatisms are associated with "extreme suggestibility" or "impressionability to [the] environment," and the mental state of the automatically inclined Miss B. is described as "insta-

bility and lack of resistance to the environment" (p. 90). It follows that precisely the automatic, not its opposite, fits the definition of "occurring because of another's influence." In any case, if that definition were valid for the allomatic, then we would have to see Jaffier, for example, as an embodiment of the concept, because he is too weak to do anything but what others suggest.

2

How shall we explain the relation between the "allomatic element" and "mutual transformation" in *Ariadne*? Alewyn assumes that these concepts are practically identical, that they refer to the same "ethical process," which means that Hofmannsthal is using the word "Element" in the sense of "component force," a force that generates a "process." It seems to me that the note makes more sense if we take "Element" to mean "natural environment," as water is the element of the fish.[7] "Das allomatische Element" would then be the enveloping medium in which it is possible for a person to exercise an active influence upon others, such a medium as would be necessary for any "mutual transformation." This idea also enables us to say something about the note immediately following: " 'Die Frau ohne Schatten': Triumph des Allomatischen. Allegorie des Sozialen" (A 218). If the allomatic somehow "triumphs," if the allomatic element is perfected, then the result must be a perfection of the social, for the principal outward manifestation of people's ability to affect one another is surely human society.

We can now begin to understand how the logical conflict between the idea of conscious intent (the opposite of the "automatic") and the idea of a "radical dissolution of the subject" might be resolved. For if a mysterious "element" is required in order that the subject's conscious intent be realized as actual influence, then not only the existence and effectiveness of such intent is asserted, but also its *insufficiency*. The idea of an "allomatic element" stands for a philosophical reflection on subjectivity that parallels the reflection on language in "Die Beiden." How *can* one subject influence another? How can the subject, considered as the strictly non-objective, be "influenced" at all? Sigismund says, "I have stepped behind a wall from where I hear everything you say, but you cannot get to me" (D4 156). The question of communication or understanding can be analyzed to the point where the idea of the figure in the dust becomes necessary, which is the content of my utterance

but without being what "I" had meant. In the same way, the question of intersubjectivity eventually yields the idea of an "allomatic element" which, in the very process of enabling one subject to influence another, also nullifies the subject's proprietary claim to such influence, removes that "wall" by which the subject is not only protected but also defined. Maack, precisely by insisting on the subject's nullity, in effect establishes the subject at the center of his world-view; Hofmannsthal, I contend, accepts the logical impossibility of even naming the subject without assuming its activeness, and so recognizes that Maack's point can be made only by allowing the idea of the subject to dissolve or deconstruct *itself*.

Still, the idea of the social as a "triumph" of the allomatic raises more questions than it answers. How is it possible to speak of the "triumph" of our vital "element," of the medium or atmosphere without which we would not exist in the first place? This question is related to the question of how we can speak of an "attainment" of the social in comedy, and from there leads back to the earliest phase of Hofmannsthal's development. For when Death, in *Der Tor und der Tod*, summarizes human communal existence in the maxim, "We bind and are bound," Claudio, with a significant alteration, expresses his own desire to belong to such community: "Gebunden werden – ja! – und kräftig binden," "To be bound – yes! – and to bind powerfully." That one "binds and is bound" in life is simply a fact, to which even Claudio's self-centered existence forms no exception, a fact he learns from the ghosts, "to whom deep feelings bind him." Although he had not *wished* either to bind these people or to be bound by them, mutually binding relations had nevertheless arisen; the actions and feelings of the dead people had all been determined in large part by Claudio's behavior toward them, and Claudio's feeling of exclusion is itself a kind of dependence on the people who represent the human community from which he feels himself excluded. Every person, whether he wants to or not, lives in an allomatic element, a medium in which it is simply impossible not to bind and be bound.

The term "social," however, as Hofmannsthal later uses it, refers not to the factual existence of this medium, but to the fulfilment of a duty on our part to develop the given allomatic tendency of human existence by *conscious will and action*, to "bind powerfully." Claudio's fault is not that he has stood in *no* mutual relation to others, but that he has slipped into such relations blindly and involuntarily. The social, which arises by a "Triumph des Allomatischen," is a conscious, active realization of the allomatic principle,

the attainment by the allomatic of its own whole potential nature; it is activity considered not as resistance or defiance, but as an *affirmation* of the unalterable order of things, as it were of the "aurea catena humana." The allomatic itself may be defined as the pre-social or proto-social, which in the "attained" social, by means of our transformation of the given fact into a conscious act of will, arrives at its own highest potency or "triumph."

In itself, as a mere "element," the allomatic is neither active nor conscious, but rather it demands of us a conscious activity in order that it be realized. This moral imperative, however, belongs to the *essence* of the allomatic, since human nature is unthinkable without the experience of self-conscious freedom and will – quite apart from the question of whether this experience proves the *existence* of an integral "self." And if our will, our conscious activity, does not tend toward the realization of the allomatic, then for just this reason the allomatic is no longer our "element" in the first place, because an integral part of our experienced nature contradicts it. It is entirely out of the question for a fish to desire or do anything that does not accord with the nature of its fluid element; water requires no "realization" as the element of the fish. It is only human self-consciousness that makes both possible and necessary Hofmannsthal's distinction between the human "element" as such and the consciously and actively realized element, which only thereby actually becomes *our* element, the social.

Or we recall the idea of the accidentalness of the self in *Der Schwierige*. In order truly to experience the social as our "element," as the prime support of our existence, not merely as an abstract idea that refers vaguely to our relations or collisions with other supposedly self-sufficient individuals, it is necessary that we, each of us, experience our own self as accidental or contingent, as a kind of confused collective hallucination, created and constantly re-created by the perceptions and comments, desires and fears, words and actions of others – including ourselves, insofar as we become self-detachedly "other" with respect to ourselves. But to experience the self *directly* in this manner is mere insanity (the inability to distinguish between myself and Napoleon). Only an indirect experience is open to us, by way of activity, the experience of *our* creative rôle in shaping the very "self" of others, whereupon the other, whose contingency we now experience deeply, becomes a true mirror to us, like Antoinette or Helene for Hans Karl. Thus the logical difficulty disappears. *Only* by exercising a conscious influence on other subjects can I experience the contingency of

myself as a subject and hence the "dissolution of the subject" in general.

"Der Weg zum Sozialen" (A 226) is therefore always a form of activity, and therefore Claudio, when he repeats Death's formulation, stresses adverbially the active "binden." Considered simply as communal situations, the allomatic and the social are both characterized by mutuality, since others have an influence (allomatically) upon me in the same way I do upon them. But the way to the social, which is already inherent in the nature of the allomatic, demands the transformation of this factual state of affairs into a purposeful act of will. If our sole desire in the pre-social condition is to feel ourselves "bound" – which is Claudio's case before the entrance of Death, when he yearns to suffer – then the pre-social condition remains unchanged, for we *are* inevitably bound anyway; "to bind powerfully" is therefore now a deeper need in Claudio, the need for conscious, outward-directed action. Or in the narrative version of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* we recall the girl's words to the Emperor, "You speak of what we are to you. Why do you never ask what you are to us?" (E 315), which also makes clear that even the path to the social "by the child" (A 226) involves not merely natural processes, but the consciousness of what we ourselves must be to those yet unborn, the having of children as a conscious act of commitment. Our own activity, in the end, is the true source not only of our binding of others, but also of our being bound by others. Thus we hear of the Kaiserin, "she felt herself shackled to those whose existence she had entered unsummoned" (E 364); we are truly bound only in that we act purposefully upon other people.

Once we grasp the distinction between the allomatic "element" and the truly social, which arises from an active "triumph of the allomatic," we can understand why in "Ad me ipsum" *Ariadne* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* are mentioned not as parallels (which they are, by implication, in Alewyn's argument) but as steps in a progression (which they are in the argument of Chapter 13 above). In *Ariadne* the social is not yet developed, for the allomatic is not realized by conscious, purposeful activity. The union of Ariadne and Bacchus, their "mutual transformation," testifies merely to the existence of the allomatic *element*, to the impossibility of absolute aloneness for a human being, since the very existence of the individual necessarily includes a binding and being-bound with regard to others. Even Ariadne, literally isolated in the *opera seria*, and aesthetically isolated by the contrast with the *buffa* action, receives in Bacchus the ability once again to transform, both

transitively and intransitively. The same suggestion is contained in the "crossing of mythical motifs" Hofmannsthal speaks of. Dionysus as death-god (Ariadne's only acceptable bridegroom) is associated even in antiquity with vulgar festivals (Zerbinetta and the four),[8] so that the two levels of sensibility in the opera are united as aspects of the single figure Bacchus, who thus symbolizes the truth that "the light are bound to the heavy" (W1 54; G 19), or again the existence of a universal human *element*, like the element of music in which this structure unfolds.

But only in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* – this is Hofmannsthal's point – is the allomatic realized as the social through the conscious action of the Kaiserin. It does not matter that the Kaiserin's intention, the theft of the shadow, is unsocial or even anti-social in character, that the deed, if carried out, would be an "Untat" (W10 48; D3 311), an outrage, like the Beggar's in the *Großes Welttheater*. Only by action upon conscious intent, even if the intent is later revealed as wrong, does a realization of the social in the given allomatic element become possible. Only thus does the inevitability of acting upon others become a voluntary and so morally significant acting, whereupon the allomatic element becomes truly *our* element, an element that also envelops the free, active aspect of our composite nature. If it were clear to the Kaiserin, from the beginning, that she has no right to another's shadow, if by a wrong action the conditions for a later right action were not created, then there would simply be *no* action in the opera, and no "Allegorie des Sozialen."

3

We must now look at the note to *Andreas*:

Sagredo [= Sacramozo] Das *Dürftige des irdischen Erlebnisses*

Das *Allomatische*

An der Gräfin zieht ihn an, daß das *Andere* in ihr für sie so bedeutend sei – er vermutet eine auf dem Weg der Verwandlung weit vorgeschrittene Seele.

An Andres ist ihm anziehend, daß dieser von den *Andern* so beeinflußbar: der *andern* Leben ist in ihm rein u. stark vorhanden wie wenn man einen Tropfen Blutes oder ausgehauchte Luft eines andern in einer Glaskugel dem starken Feuer aussetzt, so in Andres die fremden Geschicke (Andres ist, wie der Kaufmannssohn: der geometrische *Ort* fremder Geschicke).

(W30 102; E 243)

Sacramozo The *paltriness of the earthly experience*

The *allomatic*

What attracts him in the countess is that the Other in her is so significant for her – he detects a soul far advanced on the path to metamorphosis.

What attracts him in Andres is that the latter is so easily influenced by *Others*: that the life of *others* is so purely and powerfully present in him, etc.

In the words "in ihr für sie,"[9] we can see how Hofmannsthal subtilizes Maack's ideas. The "other" *in* the countess is important *for* her. In the process of acknowledging the importance of the "other" *in* ourselves, which in the first instance presupposes the persistence of the *self* as receptacle of the "other" (as in Maack), we also enter into an alienated relation *to* ourselves, the other is there "for" us, which verifies the original acknowledgment by compromising the self's otherwise supposed integrity.

More important for our purposes, however, is that "Das Allomatische" must here be understood in a *negative* sense. For Sacramozo the allomatic *is* "the paltriness of the earthly experience." In another note we read:

> The Maltese [Sacramozo] knows: my command is a command, my smile has an attractive power in general – but what is the use en somme? . . . He is assured of results, but he can easily find himself alone with them in airless space: eh bien, what more – says the Doppelgänger. Aha! oh well, what more [was weiter]! (W30 144; E 239)

By contrast with Andreas, Sacramozo can operate outwardly and be "assured of results"; whereas Andreas doubts his own powers, Sacramozo is at home in the allomatic element. But the allomatic is precisely what he does *not* want; it appears trivial to him and leaves him in a kind of vacuum.

Sacramozo desires neither to transform others nor to be transformed in his turn; his goal is an absolute "unification" (W30 144; E 238) with the "other" that he finds so significant in Maria. In an allomatic element, however, in which every individual must have a specific effect upon every other, such union is impossible, since the "other," when we encounter it in this element, is already no longer *wholly* other at all, but has already been influenced by ourselves. Therefore the allomatic for Sacramozo is "the paltriness of the earthly experience"; in this element "everyone actually only perceives in the other what is commensurable to himself," which leads to the "problem: wherein lies unification with another being?"

(W30 144; E 238). Hence also Sacramozo's belief that he can achieve his own transcendent union with Maria by way of an earthly union of Maria with Andreas (W30 101, 108, 149; E 217, 246); it seems to him that Andreas, who has not yet developed as an active individual and so in a sense is still outside the allomatic, is thus enabled to receive the "other" in pure form, without sullying it by his own nature.

Now it is not difficult to understand the note: "Andres: aufdämmernder Gedanke daß für den Malteser der mit jedem Menschen zu reden weiß, vor dem sich alle Schranken öffnen – es doch auch *eine* Hemmung gibt" (W30 116; E 239). Sacramozo's "*one* inhibition" is his inability to affirm the allomatic. Even his most trivial actions, like everybody's, involve him in the process of binding and being bound, but only up to the point at which his inner dissatisfaction, his "eh bien? was weiter," makes itself felt, his holding back from any final, willed binding of another, since the other would lose otherness as a result. "Love is the attraction exercised on us by those animate objects with which we are called to operate. Operating [Operieren] means conducting an animate organism by means of transformation to its perfection" (W30 102; E 244);[10] and this definition applies even to Maria's attractiveness for Sacramozo – who has reserved for himself three years of "Operieren" (W30 108; E 217) – but only in a narrow sense, for Sacramozo does not mean to carry out actively a "transformation" of Maria. He detects in her "a soul well along on the path to transformation," and merely wishes to create the conditions under which this soul might continue on its path in full purity, as the wholly "other," with no admixture of himself. Therefore his relation to her is called "religion, not love" (W30 110; E 205), and therefore precisely the allomatic is what must be excluded from that relation.

The figure of Sacramozo, with his "*eine* Hemmung," thus again brings into focus the inner tension of social existence. The authentic self-esteem of the social individual entails a kind of passivity or "Wiegel-Wagel," a respect and fondness for otherness in the world; but the social itself does not arise except by an affirmative realization of the allomatic, our willingness to exercise vigorously our *influence* on others. This willingness, which completes the state of irresolvable tension between activity and passivity that is the very nature of the social, is missing in Sacramozo's "Perfectomanie" (W30 148; E 236). In any case, the allomatic is not itself a "solution" to anything – the words "allomatische Lösung" do not occur in Hofmannsthal. In itself the allomatic is neither positive nor

negative but simply the element or medium of human existence in the world. To certain characters, like Sacramozo, this element can appear "paltry" and require negation; others, like the Kaiserin, affirm the allomatic by conscious will, whereupon it becomes a basis for "the *achieved social*." The important point is that although the word "sacrifice" can be applied to both, Sacramozo and the Kaiserin are opposed types. For Sacramozo it is the allomatic itself that is sacrificed, whereas for the Kaiserin, by way of her sacrifice, the allomatic triumphs.

4

Judith Ryan, in an essay on the supposed "allomatische Lösung," argues that the allomatic is not merely an "encounter with the external world," that the external world itself appears "not so much as an independent given but as a mirroring of the inner self," and that the allomatic, after we have experienced in the external world an "uncovering of our own complexity," is always a kind of *decision*: "not a person's fusion with his 'other ego,' but a differentiation, a settling upon one definite rôle in life,"[11] always the decision to be only *one* person, to realize only *one* possibility in ourselves, so that we become capable of rational and purposeful action.

Only one correction is needed. Ryan imagines the process of settling oneself as passive, a kind of recognition, not a deed; she says that the inchoate individual contains "a still unrealized multiplicity of abilities and possibilities ... which, with his entrance into life, press to be developed. Thus a heretofore concealed contradictoriness in his character is uncovered, and he recognizes that not all his existential possibilities can be realized together."[12] In other words: first we "recognize" the contradictions within ourselves, then we decide upon a single possibility, and only then can we truly begin to act. This formulation must be exactly reversed in order to reflect Hofmannsthal's thinking, where action is the primary category, not self-knowledge; action does not arise from consciousness, but rather "Acting presupposes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious." Ryan assumes that it is somehow possible for the "pre-existent" individual to enter directly into life, in that a world composed of various self-mirrorings automatically presents itself to him (to whom? – if he is not yet a single person) and offers him his choice of a personality to be realized. But at a crucial point in Hofmannsthal's thinking on aestheticism we read:

Es kann einer hier sein und doch nicht im Leben sein: völlig ein Mysterium ist es, was ihn auf einmal umwirft und zu einem solchen macht, der nun erst schuldig und unschuldig werden kann, nun erst Kraft haben und Schönheit ... Ins Leben kommt ein Mensch dadurch, daß er etwas tut ... Nur wer etwas will, erkennt das Leben. Von dem Willenlosen und Untätigen kann es gar nicht erkannt werden. (PI 235)

A person can be here and still not in life: it is utterly a mystery, that something overturns him suddenly and makes of him one who can only now become guilty or innocent, only now have force and beauty ... A person enters life by acting ... Only he who wills something recognizes life. It cannot be recognized by the volitionless or inactive person.

In other words, a true "encounter with the world," a true standing-in-life, arises only *through* action and cannot be a precondition for it. Action itself is an impenetrable "Mysterium," not a logical process based on self-knowledge.

The word "conscious" is perhaps ambiguous in this context, but the differentiation of its meanings is easy enough. As I have said, action *is* conscious in arising from conscious intention, since an intentionless action is not an action at all, but an "automatic" phenomenon; consciousness in this sense already *belongs* to the action, hence to the mystery. Now, however, we are concerned with the question of whether action arises *from* self-knowledge, from a true consciousness of our own nature and situation, and the answer to this question in Hofmannsthal is no. We can in fact go beyond what was said above concerning *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and now argue not only that action *can* arise from a false intention, but that the conscious intent behind any genuine action *must* be false, since a true knowledge of self and world is made possible only *by* action. I will come back to this point below in connection with *Der Schwierige*.

If we inquire further into the true nature of action, however, and its quality as "Mysterium," what Ryan emphasizes is useful. The external world consists essentially of images of our own self, only not in a form that can be "recognized" directly by the individual concerned.

A person perceives in the world only what already lies within him; but he needs the world in order to perceive what lies within him; to this end, however, activity and sufferings are necessary. (A 9)

Self-knowledge is not the way to action, but rather action (or "activity and sufferings," which means the standing-in-life that is made possible by action) is the way to self-knowledge. Life leads to

self-knowledge not merely by being lived ("*ge*lebt") but by being experienced ("*er*lebt"), and experience includes our own activity. "In Er-leben ist ein aktivischer Ursinn, wie in Er-reichen, Er-eilen; aber niemand hört ihn mehr, und wir haben ein reines Passivum daraus gemacht" (A 11–12).

Basically, therefore, action is an operation of our self upon *itself*, in the disguised form of a "world," and that such a thing is possible, that the self can treat its very self as the "other" or "external," is the mystery of action. Action is utterly primal – "Im Anfang war die *Tat*," says Faust – there can be no external cause for it, since the "external" in truth only receives its existence *from* action. The self, in acting, as it were separates itself from itself in order to enter life, to enter a situation in which recognizing and being-recognized first become possible. ("God said: I was a treasure known by no one, and desired to be recognized. So I created man" [A 34].) And this process of separation of the self from itself is then replicated in our relation to the world, to "Tyche = the world that seeks to separate the individual from itself in order to bring him to itself." Even the accidental, the unpredictable, the intellectually alien, is in truth a deed of the self, that it find its way to itself (which *is* only in that deed) and to its unity with what appears as "world."

But all effective outward activity in the world is a realization of the allomatic principle, so that the allomatic can be defined as the possibility of action; and it follows that the true "mystery" in the human self – which, by being a mystery, is also the "dissolution of the subject" as a delimitable entity – the mystery that overcomes "the incomprehensibility of acting" (A 217), is precisely the allomatic. The allomatic is thus not only the element of human existence but also its inner substance, insofar as the self comes into being only by way of an outward-directed activity that presupposes a mysterious allomatic principle in order that outwardness be possible. In social terms this principle is called "allomatic" or "acting upon others," but in metaphysical terms it would have to be called the "allopoetic," or even the "cosmopoetic" or "panto-poetic," that which actually *creates* the "other" or the world, "Die unaufhörliche Creation" (W30 99; E 216), the *deus in nobis*, the "dissolution of the (mere) subject," the radiant divinity in us to which our finite existence is related as the suffering Christ is to the creating Elohim. Only by being this mysterious power does the allomatic become our vital "element." Nor does this point conflict with the idea of a relation of the allomatic to rational intent and naturally explainable action. Given the true divinity of human

being, precisely the dependence of our actions on rational intent and on natural and social conditions constitutes the *mystery* of human existence, to which the name "allomatic" is applied; and in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, the motif of a renunciation of the supernatural in order to become human is accordingly the center of meaning. The true miracle of our existence is precisely its blind limitedness, which we affirm, and in truth actually create, simply by dealing actively with the real world as a real world. Again, therefore, now with reference to the allomatic, we can understand the social as a symbol of the metaphysical. Hofmannsthal's occupation with the social is not a repudiation of his earlier metaphysics of poetry; such a repudiation would not require the difficult and mystically tinged concept "allomatic." The imperfection of society as it really exists, what Sacramozo feels as "paltriness," is the allomatic in its social aspect, which brings with it, inescapably, its metaphysical aspect and so, with respect to itself, is an ever-present theodicy.

5

In the time between the conception of *Andreas* and the completion of the narrative version of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Hofmannsthal also wrote, among other things, *Der Schwierige*, which represents a kind of mean between the novel fragment and the fairy-tale. The relation between Helene and Antoinette parallels that between Maria and Mariquita, and there are significant parallels between Hans Karl and Sacramozo. Not only that Sacramozo possesses "more than grace, a true inimitable nobility" (W30 84; E 173), but also that he expresses himself "by minus dicere, not by plus dicere" (W30 112; E 201), reminds us of Hans Karl, in whom Stani admires just this "minus dicere." Or we hear of Sacramozo that he is especially "open . . . human, communicative . . . when he speaks of mystical things (which can mean for him, in the right connection, anything in the world, even the most ordinary relations and affairs)," while otherwise he is "aloof in his politeness" (W30 110; E 200). This is applied easily to Hans Karl, the self-possessed social man in whom some accidental remark – like Crescence's hope that there will be "little children in Hohenbühl again" (L2 211) – can awaken a mystical train of thought that reveals suddenly the depths of his nature. And Hans Karl's ambiguity, his unfixability, is also found in Sacramozo: "are people like the Maltese capable of having an equivalent or an opposite?" (W30 149; E 242).

More important than character traits, however, are the situations in which Hans Karl and Sacramozo find themselves. Both harbor "religion, not love" to a woman of the Maria-type, not love but a mystical vision of timeless union that suppresses any thought of a real marriage. Both see themselves as protectors of this female figure, Sacramozo in working for Maria's "final unfolding . . . into a blissful beloved" (W30 146; E 246), Hans Karl in attempting to persuade Helene that *her* marriage must be "sacred" (L2 265). And both take upon themselves – Sacramozo of his own accord, Hans Karl at the request of his sister – the task of marrying off the beloved lady to an immature young man. On this pattern, Andreas and Stani would also correspond; and in spite of definite differences in character, I think they do. We hear of Andreas, "Main direction: courage" (W30 33; E 195), which applies to Stani; both young men strive for an aristocratic superiority they see embodied in the Sacramozo/Hans Karl type; and it is actually Stani, not Hans Karl, who for a moment stands indecisively between a Maria and a Mariquita, for there is never really any danger that Hans Karl will involve himself with Antoinette again.[13]

The four-cornered configuration of *Andreas*, Alewyn's "magic square," even if "somewhat obscured,"[14] is thus still present in the figures of Hans Karl, Stani, Helene and Antoinette; but the action of *Der Schwierige*, by contrast, resembles more closely that of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, the main correspondence being that between Hans Karl and the Kaiserin. Like the Kaiserin, Hans Karl begins by pursuing a false goal, the marriage of Stani with Helene; and as in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, it turns out that the active pursuit of any goal, even a false one, still constitutes an affirmation of the allomatic, which gives rise to the possibility of the "achieved social," of later deciding in favor of a true and proper goal. Only by Hans Karl's decision, misguided as it may be, to exercise actively his influence in Helene's life, is the machinery set in motion by which the destined couple, despite their infinite discretion, nevertheless find each other. The parallel is "obscured," since the symmetry of two couples – though perhaps hinted at (or parodied) in the Hechingens – is missing. But I am not trying to show that the comedy is merely a variation of either the novel or the fairy-tale; it stands between them, with correspondences in both directions.

In particular, the genesis of *Der Schwierige* documents Hofmannsthal's growing awareness that the novel *Andreas* could not be finished as a consistent whole. As he comes to understand the figure of Hans Karl, Hofmannsthal recognizes that Sacramozo, in his

"Operieren" with Maria and Andreas, cannot possibly avoid *doing* something, and so will inevitably expose himself to life and to the allomatic. Sacramozo's nature as described in the notes is a denial of the allomatic, but his activity, like Hans Karl's, cannot avoid an implicit affirmation of the allomatic, so that his eventual suicide will have the character not of sacred self-fulfilment but of absurd self-violation. "What prevents Sacramozo from winning this woman is his lack of high self-love, religion to himself" (W30 108; E 214); but in working out the figure of Hans Karl, as a development of Sacramozo, Hofmannsthal recognizes that self-love belongs to the very essence of the type in question (hence becomes the principal force in Hans Karl) and that Sacramozo himself is therefore not a viable conception. Hans Karl's starting point, in character and situation, is similar to Sacramozo's, but he develops *logically* in a different direction, into an action more similar to that of *Die Frau ohne Schatten.* And the latter, in its operatic version, may be regarded as the attempt to realize a conception essentially similar to that of *Der Schwierige*, but in a form calculated to oppose the tendency of the age toward intellectual fragmentation, whereas the comedy is erected against the danger of social petrifaction.

That Hofmannsthal continued to work sporadically on *Andreas* even after *Der Schwierige* is not an objection to this argument. There is a fundamental difficulty in the conception of the novel, but perhaps it still might be circumvented by some form of radical irony. It is clear from the Novalis quotations frequently associated with him in the notes that Sacramozo would have become a kind of poetic philosopher (a Klingsohr), and that his function would have been to *state explicitly* the deepest metaphysical truths about the allomatic and the human self, about the "dissolution of the subject," about human life as "unaufhörliche Creation." This function is what demands that Sacramozo deny the allomatic, that he stand outside of life; for an affirmation of the allomatic always includes the decision to treat the external world as a true external, not as Sacramozo's ideal "other" but as a real object to act upon, which means that metaphysical truth – the truth that the external world is ultimately a creation of the allomatic or allopoetic mystery manifest in the active self – can no longer be expressed directly. "Action presupposes the transition from the conscious to the unconscious." In acting, and so affirming the allomatic, we renounce our consciousness of what the allomatic in truth is. In a note concerning Sacramozo we read:

> We possess an arsenal of truths that would be powerful enough to turn the world back into a sidereal vapor; but every arcanum is sealed in iron crucibles – by our rigidity and stupidity, our prejudices, our inability to grasp the *unique* [das *einmalige*]. (W30 105)

Truth manifest would destroy the very fabric of existence. Only what Sacramozo calls our stupidity and prejudice – our submergence in an allomatic element where even our thinking has an effect on its object, so that the object partakes of our nature and is no longer "das *einmalige*" – preserves our world. And yet truth is still there for us, even in the iron crucibles of individuality, as our intellectual substance, without which our existence, however securely preserved, would be senseless. Where are we?

To create a dramatic figure, a figure involved in an action, who is still somehow capable of speaking the full metaphysical truth clearly and believably: this is the problem Hofmannsthal attempts to solve with Sacramozo, as he had earlier with the hallucinatory figure of Death in *Der Tor und der Tod.* He perhaps even achieves a solution of sorts in the more subtly hallucinatory figure of Hans Karl, whose statements of truth are qualified, and so in a sense rescued, by his own repudiation of them as "bizarre" fancies. The problem as such, however, remains both absolutely insoluble and absolutely inescapable; and it is the concept of the allomatic that brings this combination of qualities into focus. Whereas the *operation* of the allomatic, especially in its ethically or socially obligatory aspect, entails an irreversible forgetting of the truth, the *existence* of the allomatic is still a "mystery," hence an insistent symbolic remembering of the truth. There are other problems that remain open for Hofmannsthal: the problem of the tragic; the completion of the scheme of distribution of functions among genres; the question of the accidental element in art. My point, however, is that the essential problem, distilled in ever greater purity from all of these, is the problem of truth: the Sacramozo problem, as it appears at once subtilized and simplified in the Sigismund problem, the problem of establishing truth, as truth, in the very midst of the allomatic, in a world of actions and actual relations among human beings.

15

THE ROLE OF "VORWITZ" IN *DAS SALZBURGER GROSSE WELTTHEATER*

Hofmannsthal's festival plays, and his other activities in connection with Salzburg, represent a development of his concern with the contingent in art. The collaboration with Strauss still results in *works*, works that reveal on examination their non-existence beyond the limits of performance, but still works, structures, in which even the property of contingency assumes, paradoxically, a necessary place. But once the Salzburg Festival is established as a regular cultural event – provided it is established in the sense Hofmannsthal envisages – the very idea of "work" will cease to be applicable to products like *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*; the book versions of such plays will be merely the written record of a repeated communal rite that belongs to no "author" but to the culture as a whole, like a service at some point in the church calendar.[1] And if the idea of the work disappears, then perhaps the problem contained in the idea of the allomatic will also disappear. Perhaps the speaking of metaphysical truth will become possible after all, as a speaking of the whole culture to itself, no longer an individual's struggle to communicate.

The question of theatricality therefore becomes critical. I have insisted on the basic theatricality of Hofmannsthal's dramatic and even of his lyrical work, from *Der Tor und der Tod* on; and I have shown, I think, that the technique of art by accident is a consequence of sound theatrical thought, not an admission of theatrical incompetence. The same holds when Hofmannsthal says, of the *Großes Welttheater*, that "For something that must have its effect on many, or indeed on everyone, many and different people must collaborate. Nowhere are pride and eccentricity more out of place than in the making of drama" (H/PZ, p. 124). He is willing to follow his own thought even when it requires the sacrifice of his own thought; but it is still his own thought that he is following. This point will perhaps be conceded for the period before close collaboration with Reinhardt. But once Reinhardt appears on the scene,

even intelligent literary critics rush to join him in treating Hofmannsthal like a theatrical babe in arms. Cynthia Walk speaks of "a lyrical–mystical tendency toward sincerity, characteristic of Hofmannsthal, that Reinhardt questions on dramaturgical grounds."[2] Hofmannsthal's attempt to use the theater as a metaphysical symbol, we infer, is naive, if not simply mistaken. But especially from a literary critical perspective, what *is* the theater if not a metaphysical symbol? Is it worth having a theater to begin with, if the theater merely digests poetry into repertoire, if it merely takes possession of dramatic works, first branding or hobbling them with its "cuts" (W24 135; L3 153), if it does not itself undergo symbolic transfiguration, if it does not acknowledge its own need for a philosophical justification that it must receive *from* the works it performs, by taking its place in structures of thought like the one by which, from *Der Tor und der Tod* on, Hofmannsthal relates the very nature of truth to the procedure of play-acting and the collective dynamics of a group watching a play? We must distinguish between theater and show business.

That neither Reinhardt nor Strauss understood this distinction was not Hofmannsthal's fault. The necessity of working with what his time and cultural situation offered was for him a *theoretical* necessity, a necessity he faced courageously in actually managing to maintain a productive relation with his collaborators, never flagging in his attempts, by tactful restraint and compromise and suggestive praise, to awaken in them a sense for his own huge philosophical–theatrical project. That this project, in real terms, must probably be judged to have failed – or not yet to have succeeded, except perhaps in *Der Rosenkavalier* – is also not Hofmannsthal's fault. Nor is it remarkable that in his intellectual isolation he toyed with a silly Nadleristic theory of theatrical tradition and his own place in it.[3] Success or failure is not the question here. The question is how a responsible literary criticism must deal with figures like Hofmannsthal. If we surrender our philosophical perspective to the perspective of, say, a Reinhardt, then we in effect do our best to guarantee, now and in future, the failure of *any* genuine dramatic–theatrical project. Our business, if we have any, is to understand the "theatrical" in terms of the enormous symbolic *possibilities* that arise from thought like Hofmannsthal's, not to join the Reinhardts and Strausses – and, cruelly, the Borchardts – in browbeating poor Hofmannsthal about the supposed theatrical realities.

"Vorwitz" in *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*

I

Das Salzburger Große Welttheater and *Jedermann* obviously go together as Hofmannsthal's two most unashamedly Catholic festival plays, but there is a great difference between them. *Jedermann* is an unsound conception, an attempt to achieve by intellectual self-denial a connection with cultural tradition that Hofmannsthal had never had any trouble achieving anyway, even in works that allude to no specific model. The *Großes Welttheater*, on the other hand, is a Nietzschean rewriting of *Jedermann*, a Catholic festival play but infused with Hofmannsthal's own metaphysical poetics, whereby its relation to poetic and cultural tradition is established the more firmly. I will concentrate on the figure of Vorwitz, for it is in relation to this apparently insignificant comic personage that the thoroughness of the play's metaphysical conception becomes clearest.[4] By using Vorwitz as an interpretive crux, however, I am not attributing to him a disproportionate status in the work. I dismiss out of hand the idea of the merely comic – what is "mere" about the "comic" anyway? – but I will also not interpret the interpretive usefulness of Vorwitz as a quality of the work itself. When the material of this chapter is developed in the next, it will emerge, in fact, that the *Großes Welttheater* is characterized at its center of meaning by a radical *resistance* to interpretation, so that interpretive usefulness and structural centralness become strictly separate qualities.

In his preface, Hofmannsthal emphasizes that Catholic belief does not exhaust the play's meaning. The idea of a stage built by "world," where humans, "in rôles assigned by God, perform the play of life," is characterized as "the metaphor that supports the work" (W10 7; D3 252); and the idea of a metaphor, especially one merely "borrowed" from Calderon and belonging to a medieval "treasury of myths and allegories," suggests the question of what *new* spirit the metaphor here serves. By speaking of Calderon as "the great Catholic poet," Hofmannsthal implies that he himself is not operating as a Catholic poet in the same sense. And in a letter to Strauss he makes himself clearer still:

> There is a religious element in this poem, as also in *Faust* ... but it is no more narrowly Catholic than in *Jedermann*, actually, at its heart, much freer than there ... The inmost core is a celebration of that lofty inner freedom in us which is synonymous with the creative and a reflection of the highest Creator – this is what galvanizes the Beggar, this is "the hugest of heaven's gifts" – he who knows it knows a feeling that sweeps along the *whole burden of earthly life* like a speck of dust. (H/RS, p. 482)

I will take up the specific relation to *Faust* in the next chapter.[5]

The question of the metaphysics of the *Großes Welttheater* is thus a real one, which we can begin to answer by recalling the argument advanced in Chapter 3 above, on the play's introductory section. When the Master emphasizes the "free action" of the coming play, the Adversary immediately remarks that he has never heard the Master "speak thus of created things" (W10 11; D3 257); and the logical implication is that man has not yet been created. But on the other hand, human history is referred to repeatedly: "Einbläser von Evas Apfel her" (W10 13; D3 260); "so halten es die Menschen von Adams Zeiten her" (W10 15; D3 262); "Das war schon den Römern bekannt" (W10 19; D3 269). What does it mean that both the Master and the Adversary act as if the present play were an entirely unprecedented mystery? Has Hofmannsthal simply adopted a figural conception of history as the repeated manifestation of eternal types that are all in truth simultaneous? Then why (with no precedent in Calderon) does he insist on the other characters' puzzlement at what the Master has in mind? Not only the Adversary but also World and Vorwitz ("Alchemy! That's what he's up to!" [W10 11; D3 257]) express themselves in this vein. Clearly the paradox of an existing human history, but with human freedom somehow *newly created* in the midst of it, is meant not to be explained away but to attract our attention. And the general proposition suggested is that human existence as a whole *begins anew* in every individual, that we *are* truly free in that the human condition is not bequeathed to us fully formed, but is entirely what we ourselves make of it. The Beggar says, after his illumination, "I am with God, in all things' center!" (W10 50; D3 313); and since the center is the ruler's place (W10 23; D3 275), it follows that part of what the Beggar has recognized is his own sovereignty (or his own participation in sovereignty) over his condition.

2

This idea has occupied us from *Der Tor und der Tod* on, that each individual freely initiates and experiences the whole of the human condition, that the individual, the needful vessel in which the magic word "uns" of the "Reiselied" is spoken, is thus also always, in his speaking, the eternal origin of the human. But in the *Großes Welttheater* this metaphysics is enacted mainly by figures who appear peripheral to the main action, Vorwitz and Death. That there is a special relation between these two attendants upon World

emerges when Death is first introduced. After the Master announces his intention of allotting a fate to each of the unborn souls, World must be prompted by Vorwitz before she objects that those who have "shorter rôles" will not willingly leave the stage (W10 14; D3 261). It is thus Vorwitz who reminds the Master of Death's necessary function in the proceeding; and it is Vorwitz who now interrupts the Master and first actually calls Death by name: "He Tod, Herr Kämmerer, man redet Euer Gnaden an!"

The relation between Vorwitz and Death belongs to the general antithetical structure of the play. Taking the "goldne Gnadenkette" (W10 65; D3 335) at the end – the "golden chain of grace," another "aurea catena"! – as a summarizing symbol, the pairs of antitheses are as follows: Master–Adversary at the extremes, beyond the ends of the "chain" itself (neither of them speaks in the last scene); Beggar–Rich Man, the figures who are separated from the chain at either end; Wisdom–Beauty, first and last in the chain proper; Peasant–King, forming the center of the chain. And as we move from the extremes toward the center, it becomes more evident that these antitheses are complementary pairs as well.[6] A sense of opposition between the Peasant and the King is hardly there at all, except as these two figures are the employers, respectively, of the Beggar and the Rich Man – employees who really serve only themselves, the Beggar in his forest of contemplation, the Rich Man in his personal acquisition of power. What is emphasized in the relation between the Peasant and the King is mutual necessity; the Peasant ("Der Nährstand") is necessary for sheer physical sustenance, while political order is necessary that the Peasant be able to carry out his function in peace ("Gebts mir an Fried, daß i mei Arbeit vorwärtsbring" [W10 26; D3 279]). And the complementary relation between antitheses is equally present at the other end of the scale, since the Adversary's function is to test and so realize that human freedom which is the Master's consummate creation.

Given Hofmannsthal's dabbling in alchemical concepts and his knowledge of Goethe, plus the relation of the *Großes Welttheater* to *Faust*, the structure of complementary antitheses in the human figures suggests a Hermetic cosmogony, a world of self-propagating oppositions that reflect an original emanative self-division in God or the One.[7] That Wisdom and Beauty fit this idea is clear, and the relation between the Beggar and the Rich Man will be gone into below. But it is interesting, again, that the metaphysical aspect of the thought – ordinarily we would say, the metaphysical "core" – is

represented by the antithetical complementarity of the peripheral figures Death and Vorwitz. World answers the Master's praise of man with a less favorable view of her own:

> Man is of my crafting, if not my most impressive product. What is worth anything in him comes from me. If he were well advised and remained within his limits, if he reined in his crazed thinking and desired nothing but to enjoy my glories and, in expiring, simply sank back into me, it would be well for him, the confounded millipede that would climb vertical walls.
> (W10 12; D3 258)

It we could remain within what World calls our "Schranken," if we could enjoy life without ever reflecting on it, then not only would we be happy, but in a sense we would no longer even be subject to Death; the cessation of our existence would be not a rude shock but a comfortable sinking back into the arms of a nature from which we had never been intellectually alienated in the first place. If we did not, in our "crazed thinking," imagine ourselves *more* than mere creatures – if the "uns" of the "Reiselied" were never spoken – it would never occur to us to complain, "Weh, daß wir Kreaturen sind!" (W10 54; D3 319), "Alas, that we are creatures!"

And the name for our fatal intellectual tendency to violate the limits of a happier animal existence ("Und deiner Tiere letztes, Frau [Welt], trägt ein seidenweiches Fell oder ein Schuppenkleid aus Gold und Silber!" [W10 19; D3 269]), the name for this insistence upon knowing things of which we would be happier ignorant, this inborn curiosity by which we in effect create our death, is "Vorwitz": literally "wit" that is too "forward," the essential imprudence of intellect. That it is the unwitting function of Vorwitz to bring into focus the whole depth of human misery is clear in the conversation with the Beggar. Wisdom's question concerning the Beggar's wife, "Did she pass away?" does not insist on an answer; but Vorwitz presses for details: "What did she die of? it probably wasn't so bad!" (W10 31; D3 286), whereupon the story turns out to be very bad ("arg") indeed. And Vorwitz then still cannot resist asking about the Beggar's children (W10 32; D3 288), which leads to another gruesomely detailed example of how miserable the human condition can become. The Beggar, in his indictment of human "having," emphasizes our possession of "the appearance" as well as "the thing," the need for a "book ... in which your world is flattered and wittified, so that what you have [in actuality] titillates you yet again as in a dream" (W10 34; D3 290). But the consciousness that is thus characterized as the principal

source of delight in human existence – what pleasure could we derive from *having* "das ganze Erdenwesen" if we did not *know* we had it? – is also revealed, by the rôle of Vorwitz and his relation to Death, as the principal source of human misery. There is no delight or misery in our existence except as we are aware of these qualities; even death is not truly death except by our awareness of it.

Vorwitz is thus the opposite of Death, in representing the desire and potential for delight in existence; but this desire is always by nature *fürwitzig*, "meddling," always goes too far and entangles itself in the misery of existence as well, thus complementing Death.[8] Or in general: man's fate is the same as man's intellectual awareness of his fate; the delight and misery of our existence are not objective givens that we then recognize, but are brought into being by the process of recognition. This proposition is expressed in pantomime when the human figures perform their dance of time. "Vorwitz ... approaches them out of curiosity and, without wishing it, is caught up in their dance, which he dances to the end without saying a word" (W10 54; D3 319). The dance is thus a symbol of the truth that our "curiosity" about our fate is itself integrally entangled in our fate.

3

The significance of this pantomime of the truth also emerges from its marking the point where Death finally assumes a speaking rôle. Up to this point, Vorwitz speaks while Death remains silent; afterwards it is Death who speaks, while Vorwitz (except for one line, which I will discuss below) speaks no more.[9] Death and Vorwitz, again, represent aspects of human consciousness. Of the two, Vorwitz, or consciousness as a desire to enjoy our existence from the point of view of spectators, predominates only until consciousness itself becomes somehow entangled in our fate, whereupon consciousness in the form of Death, an utterly helpless knowledge of our limitedness, gains the ascendancy.

And the generative principle of this process, in the dance, is the idea of time. Consciousness in itself is a kind of exuberance or self-enjoyment, a self-overflowing of our being comparable to "emanation" in Neoplatonism or Hermetism or Blake. But as soon as we become conscious of ourselves, we are also separated from ourselves as spectator from object, and the experience of time, "my ego of yesterday," is born of this self-separation. In the *Großes Welttheater*, after the introductory song of World, the theme of

time is established by Beauty's looking into her mirror (W10 52; D3 316). Self-consciousness, the process by which we derive enjoyment from our *Sein* (being), also separates us from ourselves and so involves us in *Werden* (becoming) or time, which is what happens symbolically to Vorwitz in the dance.

Or to be more specific, in "Ad me ipsum" the idea of "mirrorings" is associated with "emanating" (A 213) and with Blake via Kassner (A 223). Given the importance for Hofmannsthal of "mirrorings" in the structure of his dramatic casts of characters (especially in the other *Welttheater*), it is therefore reasonable to assume a connection between the *Großes Welttheater* and the following passage from Kassner's Blake-essay:

> These vital powers [the four Zoas] each possess an Emanation ... The action [of the prophetic books], if it can be called that, begins with the separation of the Emanation from the Zoa. In Eden the Emanation reposes in the Zoa as its happiness, like beauty in the poet's soul, eternal fructification. In the fallen state, the Emanation has torn itself loose from the Zoa and released the Spectre from it as well. I translate Spectre simply as "Death" ... It is the fate of the fallen Zoa to submit to the Spectre. Spectre is in the last analysis nothing but Schopenhauer's "Will."[10]

I contend that Vorwitz and Death operate, respectively, as the Emanation and the Spectre of World – at least in Kassner's sense, if not strictly in Blake's. As World herself points out, man's thinking is no longer integrated harmoniously with his universe; or in terms more like Kassner's, man, who is World's own true glory (Meister: "Du [Welt] aber bist da, damit du der Menschen Füße tragest. Das ist das Herrlichste, das wird von dir gesagt werden" [W10 11; D3 257–8]), has become alienated from World, and his alienated thinking has taken on the character of "Vorwitz," a fallen wit no longer properly in control of itself. World's contempt for man is not an argument against this point, for as Kassner indicates, a state of enmity between the Zoa and the detached Emanation is natural, as between Luvah and Vala or Los-Urthona and Enitharmon. And with the separation from World of human intellect in the form of "Vorwitz," the Spectre of World is also released, as Death. The internal alienation of self-consciousness, by which the individual becomes subject to transience, is thus mirrored externally in the figures of World, Vorwitz and Death; and this correspondence between internal and external opens onto the metaphysics of the *Großes Welttheater*.

The key idea is that of microcosm and macrocosm: "Microcosm: a menagerie of souls. The stone's nature is heaviness, the storm's is

movement, the plant's is budding, the predator's is fighting . . . but in us is everything together" (A 92). The *Großes Welttheater* complements an earlier *Kleines Welttheater*, thus suggesting the relation of "small world" and "great world." And man as microcosm also figures in Kassner: "Blake's myth is the myth of man, of 'eternal humanity,' of the microcosm. It is the myth of fallen man; mystical Paradise has no myth. Myth is fallen mysticism" (Kassner, p. 40). This passage perhaps indicates how we must read the word "myths" in the preface to the *Großes Welttheater*. In "Ad me ipsum," with reference apparently to the idea of pre-existence, Hofmannsthal speaks of an "analogy with Blake's mysticism" (A 214), whereas in the *Großes Welttheater* he is concerned not with "mysticism" but with "myth," a fallen world inhabited by a fallen mankind. It is true, *sub specie aeternitatis*, that "in us is everything together"; but in the fallen world of the great mythical world-theater, microcosm and macrocosm, having been wrenched apart, now stand over against one another, in tension. And this tension is reflected in the internal personal tension of self-consciousness that gives rise to the experience of time, so that even fallen man, as individual, remains an image of the (now fallen and itself self-separated) cosmos as a whole, a microcosm.

The Fall of man, as in Blake, is both a psychic and a cosmic event, which explains why it should be true that the whole of human existence begins anew in every individual. For it is not strictly correct to say that we *are* self-conscious; if self-consciousness were definable as a state, involving a subject distinguishable from that state, then the subject would not be involved in the state as its posited object. We *are* not self-conscious, but rather we *become* self-conscious, over and over; our self-consciousness has the repeatedly blundering character suggested by the word "Vorwitz." But this repeated happening of self-consciousness is not simply a natural event in the world; or at least a human being cannot reasonably regard it as such. For the nature of the "world" as it appears to us, its alienness and dangerousness, the presence of death (the Spectre), is determined precisely by the inveterate intellectual imprudence ("Vorwitz," the Emanation) of our self-consciousness – whereby we are reminded of that other world-theater, the "Reiselied." In truth, in each instant of self-consciousness, *we enact the Fall of man*, and so bring into existence, over and over, the world of time and transience and death, the fallen world we inhabit. The whole of human existence as we know it, in its fallen state, is always created anew by our own mode of being.

Our self-consciousness, however, necessarily includes an intuition of this whole state of affairs (which is what we *are*), hence also a longing for our presumed original condition of unity with everything that is. "The world, divided up into individuals, yearns for unity; Dionysus Zagreus desires to be reborn"; and in the *Großes Welttheater*, though the Nietzschean is no longer as obvious, the basic idea is the same. This is why the two most enlightened characters, Wisdom and the Beggar, both welcome Death when he comes; for Death is the end of confused appearances, the end of the narrow "personal" self (see Kassner, pp. 41–2), an entrance once more into our true "Wesenheit" (W10 58; D3 324), "essentialness," where microcosm and macrocosm are one. It is necessarily Death, moreover, not merely time, who serves as the spectrous counterpart to Vorwitz. The Fall of man, as here mythologized, is the assumption by consciousness of the character of "Vorwitz," which divides the oneness of eternal humanity and produces the imperfection of the actual human condition; it is Vorwitz's questioning that brings human misery into focus. But the Spectre liberated by this division must be the other half of the original unity and must tend, in its effects, toward the restoration of unity. Death thus *appears* as the enemy of a life generated by "Vorwitz" but in truth *is* the complement of such a life and also its true goal (as Death himself insists in *Der Tor und der Tod*). "Vorwitz" is the intellectual desire for enjoyment of our being; but this desire, insofar as it is ultimately directed at our *true* being, turns out to be a desire for Death, for release from the world of appearances.

The metaphysics of the *Großes Welttheater* is a combination of the Neoplatonic or Hermetic (in part via Blake and Kassner) with the Schopenhauerian. God, or the absolute unity of Being, emanates in the form of a desire to enjoy his own glory, which is the character of artist or "Meister," who observes figures created "in his own image" (W10 11; D3 257). This process of emanation, however, introduces a division (a Schopenhauerian "individuation") into original unity, whereby an otherwise non-existent principle of opposition ("Widersacher") is released. And this Adversary in turn discovers his proper field of operation ("Weideplatz" [W10 13; D3 260]) in the world of man; for among the things man has inherited from his creator and model is precisely that desire for conscious self-enjoyment which on the level of World appears as "Vorwitz," a wit that is altogether too forward for its own good, since by its existence it introduces an internal alienation

into the human condition and therefore, when it inquires after man, encounters not godlike glory but a vision of misery. Vorwitz, on the one hand, is an image of the original divine creative impulse itself, but on the other hand is also the Fall of man; and in that man falls, becomes confusedly self-conscious, loses contact with his own true idea of himself, and so becomes subject to time, it is also God's own image that is alienated from its origin. The Fall of man is then a universal Fall, the creation of a fallen or fragmented cosmos; and in this fallen world Death becomes both possible (by virtue of change) and necessary (as a return to original unity). Death, or the Spectre, as Kassner says, is equivalent to Schopenhauer's Will, that necessary creative impulse in Being which desires Existence. Being as Will requires Existence; but Existence, since it is individuated, is opposed to the unity of Being, so that on the level of Existence (or World) the Will appears as Death, the destruction of individual beings in order that original unity be restored.

4

The connection between this metaphysics and the play's main action involves the question of ethics and the Beggar's idea of freedom:

> Freiheit ist alleweil nah,
> Doch greifst du hart nach ihr, so ist sie jählings fern;
> Kaum schmiegest du dich sanft, so ist sie wieder da
> Und weht von dir hinan bis an die Himmelsstern.
> Sie ist geheim und läßt sich irdisch nicht benennen:
> Sie ist ein Abgrund, über den sichs herrlich lehnet,
> Doch der mit Macht sich auch dich zu verschlingen sehnet.
> (W10 50–1; D3 314)

By insisting on freedom directly, we lose it; freedom is an "abyss" that swallows us when we press too close to it. The Beggar thus answers not only his own earlier threat to destroy the world as retribution for its sinfulness, but also the Rich Man's solipsism later on:

> Was Geist ist, was euch hebet übers Tier,
> Ist meines Tuens Blüte, mir geschuldet.
> Tritt aus dem Weg, es ist nichts außer mir!
> (W10 56–7;D3 322–3)

Whatever shows intellect or spirit, what raises you above the animal, is the flower of my doing, beholden to me. Get out of my way, there is nothing besides me!

And yet, these ravings are only an exaggeration of the sensible Platonic admonition that the same Rich Man had delivered earlier to the Beggar on the subject of order:

> If your stumbling tongue is not to make an abortion of your indictment, even in giving it birth, then your inner sense, in a secret place, must make a thought-image, a meaningful magic sign, and pass it on to your tongue in an orderly fashion . . . Furthermore: to create anew this miracle of order, the inner sense must first gather concepts from a spirit world that, like the sea of stars, arches above us and flashes and sends its rays to us.
>
> (W10 37; D3 294–5)

Though he argues by logical derivation from a concept of human intellect and language, rather than by inspired knowledge gained in a moment of crisis, the Rich Man still possesses an idea of human immortality, the ultimate human freedom, which is basically the same as the Beggar's, an idea of man's existence as interwoven with the everlasting order of the cosmos (the stars, in both speeches). But the Rich Man then uses this idea in an attempt to assert his own individual power, whereupon the Beggar's "abyss" of freedom engulfs him.

This paradox, that human freedom exists in truth, but only so long as we do not insist upon it directly, is understandable by way of the notion of a fallen universe. What the Beggar says earlier about the world's need for utter renewal – by "blood and fire" if it comes to that (W10 36; D3 294) – is valid, for the world of our life and experience is a fallen world. Even after his illumination, the Beggar has not changed his opinion: "Es muß für wahr und ganz ein neuer Weltstand werden, / Sonst blieb dies gar ein ärmlich puppig Spiel" (W10 50; D3 313). But what ought we to do about this situation, or how is it justifiable to do what the Beggar does now – namely, nothing at all? A partial answer is provided by the idea of microcosm and macrocosm. The fallenness of the world is in truth identical with the fallenness of man, a mirror of our own mental condition: "Vorwitz," the forward or imprudent intellect, brings about a state of tension, instead of harmony, between man and his world, between microcosm and macrocosm, and this state of tension is basically everything that is wrong with the world. It is therefore *foolish* to attempt to improve the world by taking direct action against its imperfection. Destroy everything, says – again correctly! – the Rich Man, "but know that your action is not just infamous and evil, it is stupid" (W10 38; D3 295–6). Such direct action is a struggling against the world and so, even with the best of

motives, cannot but *increase* the tension between microcosm and macrocosm that is the root of evil in the first place. But then what should we do? A new "Weltstand" is still needed. What does the Beggar do to bring it about?

He himself answers this question as follows:

> Was schiert mich, was ihr habt? Ich bin so voller Freuden
> Und will in Wald, daß ich umblitzt von Ewigkeit
> Mich beieinander halt, an keinen Hauch der Zeit
> Die innre Himmelsfülle zu vergeuden!
>
> (W10 49; D3 312)

What do I care what you have? I am full of joys as I am, and I will to the woods, that amid flashes of eternity I hold myself together and waste my inner heavenly abundance on no breath of time!

Sich-Beieinanderhalten, for the Beggar, is the whole secret. The fallenness of the world reflects the fallenness or internal alienation of the self, and the only effective means of dealing with this problem is at its root, within ourselves. Indeed, if we succeed in "holding ourselves together," then we are no longer even really subject to time (since time is self-alienation), and we are thereby in a sense truly acting for a renewed "Weltstand," "world-state" – with the etymological suggestion of stasis as well.

Viewed internally, the Beggar "holds himself together." But viewed externally, he *accepts* the injustice of a fallen world ("What do I care what you have?"), and such acceptance constitutes a state of relative harmony between self and world, thus, paradoxically, already the opposite of fallenness or alienation. An acceptance of our fallen state also brings us closer to God, whose relation to the world is described by Wisdom as "Ein ungeheueres Gewährenlassen" (W10 46; D3 308), "an enormous letting-be"; spoken by the Beggar, who has experienced the weight of earthly injustice, the words "Was schiert mich, was ihr habt?" are "Ein ungeheueres Gewährenlassen" in their own right, a kind of *imitatio Dei* that tends to heal the division between God and his created image in man and so tends to raise precisely the fallen world it accepts.

This apparent advocacy of acceptance of the fallen world, though perhaps closer to Blake's thinking than either Kassner or Hofmannsthal imagined,[11] represents a step beyond what Kassner actually says about Blake, and has little to do with Christianity in any institutionalized form. It implies, rather, that *the Creation and the Fall are the same event*. God in the world-theater creates not Adam and Eve in Paradise, but rather *fallen* man, already subject

to "his fate" (W10 13; D3 261), to his particular rôle in an inequitable or fallen world. God, after all, as the Adversary points out (W10 13; D3 259), must know of the Fall in advance, which means that his acceptance of the Fall, his "ungeheueres Gewährenlassen," is already inherent in the moment of creation or emanation itself. It follows that by accepting our fallen state and so imitating God's acceptance, we also imitate the act of creation, we become as it were the creators of our own existence. (Hofmannsthal practically says this in the letter to Strauss quoted above.) Therefore the soul of the Beggar undergoes not one but two crises; not only must he accept his existence after the fact, but he must also affirm it before the fact, with the words, "I will it, dress me!" (W10 22; D3 274). The point of these two crises is that they are in essence the same. By accepting our fallen state and "holding ourselves together," we in truth ourselves carry out the original divine act of creation. This idea explains the paradox of freedom as expounded by the Beggar. The Rich Man's assertion of will in a sense expresses the truth, for each individual is in truth the creator of the human condition as a whole; but his words cease to be true of the person who actually speaks them, for by speaking as he does, he refuses to accept the fallen state and is therefore *not* actually carrying out the "I will it" of divine creation any longer (since the Creation is identical with the Fall). As the Beggar says, by insisting upon absolute freedom, by asserting directly even that freedom which we in truth possess, we immediately lose it.[12]

Or to look at it differently, the original unity of Being, in entering the process of emanation, takes on the rôle of artist or Master, the creator of a work characterized by Wisdom and Beauty, the two qualities actually personified. But Beauty, as a quality, presupposes detached consciousness (the mirror), and as a person is the last figure in the chain. That is, she belongs by nature to the fallen world. The Beggar, when he first sees her full-face, exclaims, "She! She is also with you! this gift of all gifts ... Is this also included among your possessions?" (W10 35; D3 292). The idea of Beauty thus again incorporates the idea of the necessity or indeed ultimate desirability of the Fall; for this supreme gift, which alone makes existence worthwhile, is part of our specifically earthly "possessions." It is significant, therefore, that the moment at which the Rich Man attempts to retract his fallenness, the moment he insists absolutely upon his infinite freedom and immortality, in the words "es ist nichts außer mir," is the moment at which Death steps in and orders Beauty from the stage.

5

But does the Beggar's rôle represent a tenable ethical position? Does the play really advocate a simple acceptance of our condition? What has happened to the idea of the social, the active realization of the allomatic? And why is the issue confused by the suggestion of Nietzschean thought – from the very beginning, via a gesture ("Master" as artificer) at the idea of the justification of existence as an "aesthetic phenomenon"?

Let us go back to Vorwitz and the one line he still speaks after the dance of time. This line is spoken immediately after the Peasant leaves the stage, when only the Rich Man and the Beggar remain. "Ganz gut hat er sein Abgang gemacht, der Bauer" (W10 61; D3 328), "Quite a good job he made of his exit, the Peasant," says Vorwitz; but *what* he says is not as significant as *that* he speaks here, and that he then speaks no more. His little speech serves as a kind of intellectual punctuation, which marks a change in the character of Death. Death and Vorwitz, again, are at once antitheses and complements, constituting between them the whole of a human, fallen, self-alienated world; and the dance of time is the point at which Death gains the ascendancy in their relation. But even after Death has begun to operate, even after the death of the four intermediate figures, Wisdom, the Peasant, the King and Beauty, Vorwitz is still in a position to comment, because the death of these four figures still makes sense logically as a result of "Vorwitz," the self-consciousness by which we become subject to time.

The Beggar, however, by his "deed," which is a reflection and repetition of the original "Ich will" by which he had come into existence, has accomplished the divine act of creation and become one with God. Vorwitz may now speak no more, for now Death has outgrown him absolutely. Death in relation to the Beggar is no longer a logical necessity, but rather an unfathomable mystery, the death of God's own image, thus in a sense of God himself or of a divine Person. Therefore the Beggar is earlier compared to Christ, by the words of Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (W10 22; D3 273), Christ's despair on the cross. By dying, the Beggar enacts the mystery of the divine Person who freely undergoes death for the world's redemption (again, a true acceptance of man's fallen state is a raising of that state); and the Rich Man's presence on stage at this dying reminds us that death is in truth an ordeal, not merely a formality. The Rich Man and the Beggar, again, have in common that both *know* of

man's immortal godlike freedom in a way that none of the other figures do. From the point of view of such knowledge, Death is an outrageous and horrifying impossibility – but at the same time, depending on how we look at it, the deepest of sacred mysteries.

Vorwitz's last little speech marks the division between two aspects of Death. Death is a natural component of the fallen world; consciousness (as "Vorwitz") by nature goes too far, involves itself in the dance of time, hence experiences the transience of all its objects, including the self (which it reflexively presents to itself as an object), hence becomes subject to Death. But once Vorwitz has fallen silent, Death is also revealed as an eternal mystery, an integral part of the act of Creation itself. The Creation includes the Fall, and the Fall in turn implies Death, as the only means by which original Being, once fallen, can be gathered back into itself once more; Death, to use the Beggar's terms, is how eternity "holds itself together." God, therefore, in emanating, becomes not only the artist but also Christ, the divine Person who submits to Death, and the relation between Christ and the Beggar expresses the truth that this free decision to die is a capability of every human individual. Christ is that god who assumes the limitations of human fate; and as both the Rich Man and the Beggar know, every individual is thus Christ, in essence an immortal creating god. The Rich Man, however, when he asserts his immortality directly, fails to make precisely the sacrifice by virtue of which he *is* Christ in the first place, and so contradicts his own divine nature.

But again, do these two aspects of death imply an ethical doctrine? For Kassner they do; he describes the temporal aspect of death as follows:

> Death, in short, signifies the predominance of the Emanation. When our spirit serves nature and slavishly collects what she apathetically teaches, when our soul, locked in the body, accepts what the senses offer, when our courage drowns in the love of a woman and our will withers in woe at our fate, then we are dead. (Kassner, p. 34)

A life that in any way entangles itself with earthly experience, in other words, a life at all influenced by "Vorwitz," is already death. But Hofmannsthal goes beyond Kassner, for in the *Großes Welttheater* Vorwitz is not merely a mask or disguise of Death. Vorwitz and Death, rather, as the Emanation and Spectre of World, are equal contraries; and Vorwitz has an eternal aspect as

well. He himself, under the name "Vorwitz," appears only in his temporal aspect; but the intellectual imprudence by which we push beyond a relatively comfortable animal existence is also an image of the Creation itself, of God's emanating or stepping forth out of the comfortable totality of absolute Being, out of the unfruitful *solitaria Patris caligo*.[13] And Vorwitz's necessary submission to time, then, that little comic pantomime, is in its turn an image of God's eternal sacrifice as Christ. As Hofmannsthal says in "Ad me ipsum": "Sacrifice as self-relinquishment. (This already resides in the transition from one moment to the next.)" We do not *need* to be like the Beggar, who would be Kassner's ethical model. Even our apparently helpless passage from one instant to the next is already a participation in Christ's eternal sacrifice. In our utterest helplessness, in the anguish of the intellectual self-alienation that we experience as time, we thus in truth constantly enact the Creation itself and so realize our union with absolute Being. *Sein* and *Werden* are one. It is this truth, in the final analysis, that looms behind the comic figure of Vorwitz.

My point, then, is that the *Großes Welttheater* espouses no ethical doctrine whatever, even though it focusses our attention strongly on the question of how best to "play our part" in life. The heroic renunciation and death of the Beggar are not an ethical model but the symbol of an ineffable mystery that resides in *all* human life, even in Vorwitz and in those characters as it were under his protection, the King and especially the Peasant –"Ganz gut hat er sein Abgang gemacht, der Bauer." *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, which is clearly a related case, advocates a commitment to limited human life despite the blandishments of intellect or "spirit"; but the *Großes Welttheater* cannot be said correspondingly to advocate a simple acceptance of worldly injustice. The Salzburg play, rather, places its ethical questions in a metaphysical context, and culminates in a vision of truth that has no bearing on those questions. And yet, on the other hand, it is the presence of such ethical questions that makes the difference between the *Großes Welttheater* and *Der Tor und der Tod*. Both plays are dramatized metaphysical mysteries, but the world-theater no longer attempts to exploit its performance as a ritual realization of truth. In Salzburg, rather, the truth is played out among peripheral figures; our attention is held primarily by the Beggar's question, the question of how we shall *apply* the truth in our ordinary existence, outside the theater, and by precisely the *absence* of a metaphysically founded answer to this question. Our situation in

the theater is thus exactly the human situation as seen in the light of the allomatic, torn between an inescapable awareness of truth (in the mystery) and a necessary forgetfulness of truth (in its application).

16

SALZBURG AS A THEATER

The response to tradition in the *Großes Welttheater* is similar to that in *Jedermann*, but combined with a more cohesive metaphysical vision; the metaphysics is similar to that of *Der Tor und der Tod*, except for a focus on ethical rather than ritual implications; the ethical fable of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* is taken over, yet stripped of its presumed applicability as prescriptive doctrine. But what is the *Großes Welttheater* in itself? Does it offer a solution to the problems that arise in the neighborhood of *Der Schwierige*, especially the Sacramozo-problem? Perhaps the strict disjunction between truth and its ethical application is an artistic method, as it were, of making room for the truth, permitting it to be known directly. Or perhaps, by awakening our ethical concerns but denying them any philosophical basis, the play leaves us no choice but to build a life out of the particular social norms and usages that surround us, and so operates against the intellectual fragmentation of society. In order to clarify this matter, we must understand a bit more about Hofmannsthal's view of Salzburg.

I

In the popular mind *Jedermann*, more than any other play, is associated with the Salzburg Festival. But although the genesis of *Jedermann* probably owes a certain amount to Reinhardt's influence, and although the idea of festival productions in Salzburg had been floating around among Hofmannsthal's associates since at least 1903, still *the* Salzburg play, for Hofmannsthal, which in every step of its conception, genesis, and realization is intimately connected with the exigencies of an existing Festival program, is *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater.* If *Jedermann* is the great Salzburg success, and if the *Großes Welttheater* never as fully established itself at the Festival, it follows merely that the reality of Salzburg does not coincide with Hofmannsthal's idea.

Not all the evidence on Hofmannsthal's idea of Salzburg is equally useful; much of what he writes on this subject is mere advertising which does not sustain the level of thinking on which a project like the *Großes Welttheater* is developed. Especially the Nadlerism of the essay "Festspiele in Salzburg" (P3 444–50) and of section II of the question-and-answer brochure on "Die Salzburger Festspiele" (P4 91–2), the idea of a kind of autochthonous theatricality in the geographical area, is a line of thought which, whatever foundation it has in reality, cannot figure significantly in either the actual crafting of a play or a precise critical approach.[1]

The idea of the audience, however, provided we avoid making untenable psychological assumptions, is admissible as a critical tool, and is an integral part of Hofmannsthal's most productive thinking on the nature of drama from his earliest writing on. A form of this idea is both the center of Hofmannsthal's vision of the Salzburg Festival and the main source of meaning in the *Großes Welttheater*. The principal characteristic of the Salzburg audience, says Hofmannsthal, is its heterogeneity:

> In all countries there is today a crisis of the theater, which is at the same time an intellectual crisis of the theater public, but even the idea of this crisis is different in each country ... One cannot assert that Salzburg is untouched by this crisis, but still it is like that point in a ship which, in rough seas, undergoes relatively the least motion, and this by virtue of the highly peculiar composition of its public. For the public at this Festival is the synthesis of three or perhaps four spectator-groups of rather different natures, each a public for itself, which socially and in their taste, or even in their world-view, would not cohere with each other – if they were not temporarily held together as a unity by a common force, precisely the Salzburg Festival atmosphere. (P4 465–6)

I will argue that this "holding together" of the Salzburg audience is the theatrical function of the *Großes Welttheater* and in turn implies a larger cultural function for the work, which is suggested in the question-and-answer series by the idea of reviving an "Europäismus" that had flourished from 1750 to 1850 (P4 94). The heterogeneity of Salzburg is the heterogeneity of Europe, and the unity of Salzburg is the unity of Europe, a unity that has yet to be created in its newest form.

2

I argued in Chapter 13 that Hofmannsthal's ambiguous use of the word "lyrical," his attempt to see the technique of art by accident

or the genre of musical theater as a return to his own earlier magical–metaphysical poetics, is related to an idea of the present as a uniquely exposed age, in which socially established metaphors no longer mediate effectively between the individual and the whole paradoxical truth of human being. In the "Aufzeichnungen zu Reden in Skandinavien," which are influenced by van Eeden's and Gutkind's fatuous *Welt-Eroberung durch Helden-Liebe* (where we hear, among other things, that "Der Sozialist ist der neue Magier, der übernatürlich alles nach seinem weißen Willen lenkt und mächtiger ist als die ganze Welt"),[2] this idea of the present age reaches its fullest expression.

> World-process in the present: metaphysical affair; difficult to grasp at all, except by deeds. Productivity of deeds. Only individuals competent.
>
> (P_3 357)

Society, as a valid intermediate term between the individual and the world-process as a whole, is no longer effective. The individual is utterly exposed, and new concepts of both freedom and law must now somehow arise directly from his "deeds."

Against the background of this thinking, *Der Schwierige* is a return to common sense, especially in the treatment of Neuhoff. Van Eeden insists that a unification of all mankind under absolute truth is attainable:

> All nuances of faith and religion are only misunderstandings. If we had a better communicative medium, a transcendent language, it would emerge that all men at base believe the same thing, that they have the same view of life and the world.[3]

And *Der Schwierige* rejects this argument. Misunderstandings are there understood as the very substance of social existence, which in turn is the only available symbolic medium that makes possible a valid and enduring relation of the individual to his true being. There is "no transcendent language."

The trouble with *Der Schwierige* is that while it represents, in aesthetic terms, a relatively satisfying resolution to the problems of language and society, especially as these problems appear in the Chandos letter, it still does not satisfy the exacting requirements of Hofmannsthal the educator, whose later efforts in the genre of comedy, especially *Der Unbestechliche*, accordingly tend in the direction of the didactic.[4] *Der Schwierige*, in order to function properly, must be a symbol within a symbol, by which the symbolic nature of society as a whole is revitalized and rendered translucent.

But in an unsettled cultural climate like that of Germany and Austria in the early twenties, do there still exist any social structures sufficiently cohesive to justify such a subtle approach? "Perhaps its gentle language will one day become inaudible,"[5] says Staiger of *Der Schwierige*; but for Hofmannsthal this may have been more than merely a future danger. *Der Schwierige* is an "ordinary-*looking* piece" (H/RB, p. 163), that can even be well received for the wrong reasons.[6]

At any rate, Hofmannsthal never breaks completely with his metaphysical and political thinking of 1916, or with "Die Idee Europa" (P3 369), which is an essential part of his conception of the Salzburg Festival. The pretensions of this thinking are tempered in the Salzburg project and the *Neue deutsche Beiträge*, by comparison with the Scandinavian speech-notes; but it remains true that a formulation like "sich selbst wählen in gottgewollter Selbstwahl" (P3 351) could hardly describe more exactly the Beggar's part in the *Großes Welttheater*. And in *Der Turm* there are still echoes of van Eeden. The tenacity of these wartime attitudes, again, reflects the character of Hofmannsthal the educator, who, for all his confidence in the value of his earlier, subtler works, could never put behind him the thought of actually laying hands on the present age and shaping it anew.[7] In the very process of developing the idea of accidental art and making the characteristic sacrifice of the teacher, the sacrifice of an insistence on the validity of his own thought, Hofmannsthal also develops his theory of the allomatic; and it is the theorist of the allomatic who then takes to heart the lesson of his own theory, that we contribute to a true realization of the social only by deliberately exercising our influence on our fellows, by *not* trusting to accident. Contradiction, even a form of prostitution – or at least the struggle against it – becomes practically inevitable in this intellectual situation.

By the twenties, however, Hofmannsthal's position had become more moderate, owing to a sense of community that seems to arise from the ideas surrounding *Der Schwierige*. Again we think immediately of the *Großes Welttheater* when we read in the Scandinavian notes:

> If the law is drawn into the individual, and the individual into the law, then in truth the rule of causality is conquered and a new form of binding supplants the contrat social, for there is no contrast between the individual and the whole. (P3 365)

But in the *Großes Welttheater* itself, the problem of individual and community is not disposed of so easily; a "new form of binding"

resolves the Beggar's own situation, but the social problems he has complained of remain before us. (Or in the terminology of the last chapter, the ethical and the metaphysical are wrenched apart; neither serves as a foundation for the other.) Although an idea of the communal as such, in the abstract, is central in Hofmannsthal from the beginning, it is only in *Der Schwierige* that the actual accidental shape of a society, in all its particularity, becomes symbolically important. And this state of affairs, via the idea of the imperfection of social structure as a token of the fallen state of universal being, is then developed in the *Großes Welttheater*, where the question of acceptance is raised. It is not sufficient to reconcile the *idea* of "the whole" (Gesamtheit) with that of the individual, for the "contrast" or tension between the individual and the actual, accidental, unjust order of his community remains nevertheless. Precisely the universal symbolic cohesion or "law" of our being, the mirroring of our fallen consciousness in our communal existence, ensures that this tension, and with it the ethical question of acceptance, must persist.

It is therefore not merely "Die Idee Europa," but a concrete realization of this idea, that Hofmannsthal envisages in the Salzburg Festival and aims at as the effect of the *Großes Welttheater*. If it is true that ours is a uniquely exposed age, with no valid communal forms to mediate symbolically between the individual and the truth, then it follows that a symbolically cohesive community must be created anew, a real community in space and time, not merely a doctrine of "Europeanism"; otherwise the truth to which we are exposed is still a source of individual confusion and communal fragmentation. But the development from Chandos through the tragedies to *Der Schwierige* culminates in the recognition that society, in order to function symbolically, must *already* be there, and cannot be created anew by those who belong to it. This is the general form of the dilemma that arises from the separation of the metaphysical and the ethical in the *Großes Welttheater*. Somehow we must find a way between the imperative of acceptance and the imperative of creative renewal; somehow Hofmannsthal, as a teacher, must find a way between being a follower and being a leader. The musical plays are an attempt to deal with this problem by permitting the overintellectual *Zeitgeist* itself to assert its presence in that accidental theater, in the hope that it will there assume the quality of a communal order and so counteract its own socially fragmenting tendency. But both *Ariadne* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, each in its own way, are inescapably *works*, the taking of

intellectual positions that, merely by being positions, contribute to the self-rending of the age; and the "gentle language" of *Der Schwierige* threatens to be drowned out altogether. Does the *Welttheater* in Salzburg offer a way around these difficulties?

3

Der Tor und der Tod, whatever its limitations, proves extremely fruitful in Hofmannsthal's development. We have discussed one progression through *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* and the Chandos letter to *Der Schwierige*, and we have noted that the material and thematic structure of *Der Tor und der Tod* are later picked up and reworked in *Jedermann*, *Ariadne* and the *Großes Welttheater*, to which group we might add the planned *Pentheus*. If we now ask why Hofmannsthal was repeatedly tempted to rewrite *Der Tor und der Tod*, I think the answer has to do not only with thought or symbolism, but also with the complex of verbal ironies by which in the early play the understanding audience is invited to transform itself into an aboriginal human community carrying out ritually the creation of death, the sacrificial act by which man first becomes what he is, an act that in truth is carried out in each moment of existence but is revealed to us only through the medium of art. Despite the temporary ascendancy of the attempt to throw open the theater to actual society or culture, the idea of creating a more perfect human community *inside* the theater is one that Hofmannsthal never loses sight of, and returns to especially in the works that are more or less rewritings of *Der Tor und der Tod*.

In the case of *Jedermann*, which along with the old *Pentheus* plan is a project Hofmannsthal speaks of in connection with his dream of 1904 concerning a Salzburg-like theater reform in Weimar,[8] the subtle verbal and metaphysical machinery of *Der Tor und der Tod* is ruthlessly eliminated. Its place is taken, we are told, by something already there in the English model, by supposed parallels between our own time, especially our service to Mammon, and the time for which *Everyman* was written. Even the form of allegory figures here, for "It is a danger in our time, and also to the credit of our time, at the threshold of which old Ibsen stands, that we have once again come to the point of having to stand the test of allegory" (P3 116). The audience at *Jedermann* are meant to be transformed into a higher community by undergoing an especially direct experience of their own *Zeitgeist*, and at the same time seeing their condition mirrored in that of a highly cohesive medieval commu-

nity which thus in turn becomes *part* of the allegory. We are shown our true state in a compoundedly allegorical medium that makes our state (our *need* for allegory, the simple intensity of our crisis) as it were truer still, here and now, in the theater.

This procedure, however, depends on any number of questionable historical and cultural assumptions, and it is significant that the initial phase of work on *Ariadne* was undertaken as an interruption in the work on *Jedermann*. For *Ariadne* is much more a self-contained structure, much less dependent on the accuracy of a particular analysis of the age. The accidentalness of the art form of musical drama awakens in the spectators as a group a clear sense for the ephemeral quality of their gathering in the theater, while at the same time the use of just such accidentalness as a theme in the fiction makes available a detached consciousness that transcends the ephemeral without negating it. But this transcendence of the ephemeral, this dramatization of the individual's self-defining in thought, is still also a communal phenomenon, though not a social one; our knowledge of belonging to an accidentally composed group of people, at a particular time and place, is needed to support the experience. Even our sense of our own individuality, therefore – and our association of this sense with Bacchus, who has escaped Circe in the same way that we, by reflecting on our situation, escape the oblivion of pure chance – has the character of participation, not separateness; one might say that "there is no contrast between the individual and the whole."

In the light of Hofmannsthal's whole development, this is at least a reasonable way of looking at *Ariadne*, and I maintain that the *Großes Welttheater* also surpasses *Jedermann* in the direction of self-containment in the theater, that it is a good deal closer in spirit not only to *Ariadne*, but also to *Der Tor und der Tod*. The twofoldness of death, as both a logical consequence of our imprudent thinking and a sacred mystery reflecting our ultimate divine identity, corresponds to death as both idea and reality in *Der Tor und der Tod*; and this conception of death is supported by the same metaphysics in both works, the idea of human existence as order asserted against aboriginal chaos in every instant.

But the *Großes Welttheater* is also something entirely new for Hofmannsthal. In *Der Tor und der Tod* the technique of play-within-play is employed to reveal a strict philosophical unity between stage and auditorium; our recognition that Claudio (as spectator) and the ghosts (on the inner "stage") are merely mutual reflections implies the recognition that we too, *by* being spectators,

are involved in the process of mirroring. In *Ariadne* the relation between the inner and the outer play is left open as a challenge by which we are induced to recognize the formative or unifying power of even our apparent non-activity as an audience. But in the *Großes Welttheater*, it seems to me that unity is not even a question, that the outer play does nothing but provide a metaphysical frame for the inner play and so establishes precisely the *disconnection* between metaphysics and ethics. The "title" of the inner play, as Vorwitz remarks, is insisted upon rather strongly: "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" (W10 15; D3 263). An angel explains:

> The book that I hold in my hands, which you all know, contains the kernel and sense of your play gathered into one saying. It is written there: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, but thy God, Him shalt thou love above everything. [Reversing the order of Matthew 22:37–9, Mark 12:30–1.] – Thus is indicated what the play shall contain, and it is the same that the title comprehends in itself: Do right! God over you!
>
> (W10 16; D3 264)

This speech, however, has little to do with what happens in the inner play. There are occasional warnings from Wisdom or an angel when a character begins to forget himself, but the only actual events are the Beggar's accusation and conversion; and what emerges from these events (we have seen) is not so much a moral teaching as a philosophical theodicy, an understanding that injustice, hence the corruption of relations among individuals, is inescapable in the real world, therefore an understanding that the command "Tuet Recht!" is not strictly fulfillable.

Again, a complete idealist metaphysics is implied in the text; but what we learn *about* this metaphysics is mainly that it is not ethically applicable. The truth that each person in each self-conscious instant performs Christ's sacrifice and so creates the whole of human existence anew, including the articulated order of the world, offers no guide for behavior, even though it does imply the *necessity* of such a guide. Again it is the Rich Man, in his discourses on the subject of order (W10 36–9; D3 293–7), who makes this point. Our very existence is the establishment of articulated order, and it follows that to operate in defiance of all established order is philosophically "stupid," contradictory, senseless, an acting as if we did not yet exist. But philosophically considered, all order is still strictly arbitrary, indistinguishable from the unprecedented creative act that is our being. An ethical formulation therefore cannot be metaphysically tenable without becoming impossibly

vague in practice. The implied ethics of the play is *entirely* contained in the words "Tuet Recht!" There must be an order, a standard of "rightness" that we acknowledge as having priority and precedence over our own opinions. But no further specification of that standard, on philosophical grounds, is possible. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," quotes the angel, and in what objective sense is this commandment *not* fulfilled by the Rich Man's offer of a job to the Beggar?

The Rich Man's difficulty is mainly with the second part of the title, "Gott über euch!" And his failure to grasp the point of these words is as "stupid," contradictory, senseless, as the Beggar's resistance to the command "Tuet Recht!" Our responsibility for the maintenance of even an imperfect ethical order ("Tuet Recht!" – which the Rich Man does understand) shadows forth the divine quality of our nature, our share in the Creation itself. But the truth that ultimately there is no distinction between divine being and the human freedom manifest in each individual becomes an absurdity ("es ist nichts außer mir!") as soon as we attempt to draw conclusions from it; for the drawing of such conclusions retracts precisely the sacrifice by which our divine being is manifest. Therefore the only reasonable way to think or speak of the divine (even as we recognize it *in* ourselves) is as a power above us: in other words, "Gott über euch!" A thorough understanding of the play's philosophy thus leads to the conclusion that the only full and adequate formulation of it is given by the "title" of the inner play, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" Any more specific formulation produces absurdity. As "Tuet Recht!" has become the whole of ethics, so "Gott über euch!" has become the whole of metaphysics.

This point is crucial because of its implications concerning the audience, for it now follows that there is no difference whatever, or no ascertainable difference, between the depth to which, say, a Viennese intellectual understands the *Großes Welttheater* and the depth to which a chestnut-vendor or a peasant does. The intellectual has perhaps arrived at his understanding by a more complex mental process, but if he now attempts to distinguish himself by explaining that process, then he has simply missed the point, in the same way as the Rich Man does. And conversely, the chestnut-vendor's or the peasant's silence on the play's metaphysics is not evidence that he does not understand; such silence is precisely the correct logical consequence of that metaphysics. For everyone, from professor to clodhopper, the work's whole meaning is contained in the words, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" A feeling for

this state of affairs, for intellect's debt of respect even to that thick-tongued life in which intellect is not obviously present, is expressed in Vorwitz's last words, his only words after Death has begun to operate, his tribute to the Peasant: "Ganz gut hat er sein Abgang gemacht, der Bauer."[9]

It is this overleaping of intellectual differences among spectators that corresponds to the attempt, in *Der Tor und der Tod*, to create a community in the theater by means of ritual. The difference between the intellectual and the non-intellectual remains, as do differences among nationalities and in general the differences among the endlessly varied individuals who make up a Salzburg audience. But beneath all these differences there is a level of perfect communication, and therefore community, represented by the utter simplicity into which the work's complex structure of meaning resolves itself. That by which the individual spectator knows himself to be different from his fellows is revealed as a mere rôle he is playing, in a theater that thus reflects both the actual and the fictional character of the stage erected within it, and in turn therefore symbolizes the essential theatricality of the human world as a whole. In "Das alte Spiel von Jedermann," Hofmannsthal, with a certain affectation, *imagines* the joyous experience, for a disillusioned European intellectual, of feeling himself "a spectator among spectators," participating directly in the naive religious responses of a festive crowd; but in the *Großes Welttheater* he produces a text which, not by way of any supposed emotional or cultural condition in the audience, but simply by being understood as fully as possible, actually *establishes* this experience.[10]

4

At least since Hemsterhuis' *Lettre sur la sculpture*, we have been in the habit of attaching value to the "richness" in meaning of poetic works; and it therefore perhaps disturbs us that in the *Großes Welttheater* Hofmannsthal's aim is to *restrict* the suggestive or ramifying quality of his writing, to contain the entire meaning of his work within the five words, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" Any gloss upon this formulation, however simple, is a misunderstanding of it. To specify a particular type of conduct as "right" action is to miss the point that our existence is itself the articulative act by which rightness comes into being; but this idea of creative human being, considered as a doctrine, is senseless, since rightness or justice must be an objective standard for action – not an indi-

vidual's conscious creation, as the Beggar tries to make it when he asserts, "rights are miserable lackeys" (W10 45; D3 306). Even the Rich Man's sermon on the concept of "order" is inadequate, since its argument, by being a rational argument, places the speaker above the order he speaks of, thus places order in the service of the individual rather than vice versa. And as for the second part of the angelic "title": to specify or locate or describe God, beyond the simple naming of Him, is to miss the point that "All deities reside in the human breast,"[11] that the center and source of divinity is in ourselves; but this truth is also not a reasonable doctrine, for as doctrine it denies the very sacrifice by which human divinity is expressed – this being the contradiction in the Rich Man's solipsism. Even the Beggar's sermon on God as the essence of "freedom" (W10 50–1; D3 313–14) is inadequate, for it implies in the speaker a state of perfect peace by which his status as an individual "creature" is transcended; and it is precisely by being creatures, helplessly subject to time, that we acknowledge God's being "above" us. The Beggar's exclusion from the dance of time – "Alas that we are creatures!" – is in this sense as much a defect as the Rich Man's exclusion from the dance of grace – "Not him!" (W10 65; D3 335). I do not mean that the Beggar fails in his personal duty to God. My point is that his *speech*, on God and freedom, fails as an interpretation of the play or of the words "Gott über euch!"

The play's thought includes a strong element of philosophical idealism that tends away from established Christian doctrine in the direction of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche. But the "metaphor" or convention on which the play is based, as well as its visual aspect and explicit doctrine, is borrowed from an embattled Counter-Reformation Catholicism. I contend that this combination of opposed philosophical elements is *not* aimed at an eventual synthesis or compromise. The meaning of the *Großes Welttheater* is neither Christian nor Nietzschean, nor even Blakean, and does not attempt to reconcile these strains of thought. The opposed elements, rather, are meant to cancel each other out, to reduce the play's meaning to a minimum, to leave, as "meaning," *nothing but* what the angel says, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" Hence the use of Christian thought as a shell or surface, beneath which the Schopenhauerian or Nietzschean element is more or less concealed. The advantage of the Christian "metaphor" (curious as this may sound) is that it is worn out, used up by history, that when faced with it in a modern play we expect to find *new* meaning in it –

whereas the expectation of, say, a Salzburg audience with respect to a superficially Nietzschean work would be simply to understand it. And when it turns out, in the *Großes Welttheater*, that the required new meaning for Christian metaphor is absent – that the submerged philosophical thought does not interpret but merely supersedes Christianity, or supersedes at least the rigid, institutionalized Christianity suggested by the Spanish model – then the result, again, is a reduction of meaning, an emptying of all meaning beyond the inner play's "title."

Or let us consider the dramatic climax, the moment at which the Rich Man is cut off from grace. "Nicht ihm!" commands the angel, despite Wisdom's protests. In Calderon, the Child provides a structural transition between the figures who are saved and the Rich Man, and his fate emphasizes the inscrutability of God's ways, the uselessness of insisting on a humanly understandable justification of them. Therefore, when in Calderon God *does* succinctly and powerfully justify his treatment of the Rich Man, the latter is as it were double-damned, his fate doubly integrated into the whole structure of thought.[12] But in Hofmannsthal the Master is not even present. The Rich Man's exclusion is abrupt, unmediated, undefended, at the moment when his hand is about to touch Beauty's; it is strictly an exclusion, *not* an integration. The Master's work of art, in the end, is simply not big enough to include the Rich Man. The line is drawn; the Christianity of this world-theater is not elastic, not infinitely interpretable, not reconcilable, for example, with the version of Christ represented by Vorwitz. The two levels of meaning, again, cancel each other, and "meaning" is reduced to the words "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" – to the *words*, nothing more.

Or as I have already suggested, the *Großes Welttheater* simply does not present itself as a poetic "work," with a meaning that is meant to germinate and ramify in the knowledge, thoughts, feelings, experiences, actions of a sensitive and critical audience. Its meaning, rather, by being entirely contained in the words that formulate it, is revealed to every member of the audience in exactly the same way, and so functions as a token of our *community*, not our diversity, of our belonging-together, not our interpreting intellectual faculty. If we take the word "meaning" more broadly, we might say that the play's meaning is constituted entirely by the belonging-together of the audience. We do not belong together in a particular spirit or doctrine or belief. No specification of *what* we have in common is possible; or rather any attempt at such a

specification must necessarily interpret, and so invalidate, the crucial formulation, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!" Van Eeden dreams of a "transcendent language" in which it will be revealed that all philosophies and religions are one. Hofmannsthal produces not a transcendent language (in the sense of *langue*), but something more like a universal utterance or *parole* which, by saying nothing but itself, by being nothing but itself, belongs for a moment to all of us in exactly the same way, and so is what *we* are, our communal being, our playing the great play of the world.

But the *Großes Welttheater* can have this meaning, this function, only in Salzburg. If it is presented, for example, to a relatively homogeneous Burgtheater audience, then it has no meaning whatever, for the members of such an audience, simply by being there, already know (or assume) a certain amount about what they have in common. Only for what Hofmannsthal claims is the radically heterogeneous Salzburg audience, for a group who cannot possibly *begin* by understanding that they belong together, does the simple ritual experience of coming together, of forming a community, of doing *nothing but* resist the forces of social and cultural fragmentation, become significant. The Festival itself, its "atmosphere," has begun the work of bringing together its infinitely various participants into a community, and *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater* is meant to complete the task, to realize, for the sake of "European" culture, Salzburg as a central seminal theater.

5

The *Großes Welttheater* thus offers a solution to the problem of poet as educator, how the poet may be at once both a leader and a follower in his culture. For it turns out that the true intellectual leader, who has a deep grasp of the metaphysical bases of his culture, finds himself in perfect agreement and sympathy with the simplest of the culture's followers, with the individual who, when he hears the angel deliver that inherently complex commandment, hears nothing except the words. The idea operating here is that of the "Volk," about which Hofmannsthal had noted in 1917, "When you meet persons . . . whose dialectical deficiency surprises you, but then awakens in you a new meditativeness, persons in whose midst the events of the world appear less confused, and even suffering less senseless . . . then know: you are among the people [Volk]" (A 182–3).

By way of this idea of the "Volk," and its "dialectical deficiency"

which turns out to approach truth no less adequately than philosophical speculation, we can understand the relation between the audience-community of the *Großes Welttheater* and the vision of a new Europe. In "Die Idee Europa" Hofmannsthal and Borchardt (see H/RB, pp. 123, 234) had worked out a scheme of historical phases through which the concept of European unity has passed, from an original "ecclesiastical" simplicity to the "highest form of the concept: the German philosophy of humanity [Humanität]" (P3 371). The constant danger to Europe, however, as represented later by the Adversary with his books and by the Rich Man, is a tendency toward pedantic exaggeration and misapplication of the idea of *freedom* – or of the generative centralness of "Humanität" in the structure of existence – a culturally disruptive intellectual quibble that appears ever more strongly from phase to phase. Our insistence on freedom leaves us with a "pseudo-freedom" ("Scheinfreiheit") that has lost its connection with the "law" of our "being" (P3 380). But if our "old extremity" thus tends toward "chaos," there has also arrived a "new extremity" ("neue Not"), in the catastrophe of the World War that grew out of the most recent political, economic and technological manifestations of Europe's old penchant toward dissolution; and this new extremity reveals the saving power of "suffering as a divine principle":

> Knowledge of God in the turbulence of technology. Awakening of primal powers: the *people* [Volk], the sacred and substantial depths, where life was always an eternal war – by them and in them a revelation of the incomprehensible behind the given: a Something that was always more real than individuals. (P3 381)

If the order of ideas in this fragmentary text means anything, then the "depths" here must be the womb of "A new European Idea" (P3 381).

The trouble is that there are three dots in the text, and no logical connection between the passage on extremity and "Volk" and the passage following, which discusses how the new Europe will actually arise:

> It will be isolated individuals, a silent congregation that was already there, in whom the last phase of the concept of *Europe* is defended and deepened. Here alone Europe is felt as the intellectual ground-color of the planet, the European as an absolute standard against which the merely national is always measured and corrected.
>
> Among these people Nietzsche will have a place; but perhaps one can say that his Europeanism is flawed, because he retreats to Europe instead of broadening himself to Europe. (P3 382)[13]

The link between these ideas and the idea of the "Volk," however, is established by the *Großes Welttheater*, which, though it makes itself available to the most varied possible audience, is actually *addressed* to the "silent body" of true Europeans, to those intellectuals who include Nietzsche among their forebears, but have also passed beyond Nietzsche, have faced the problem of being both leaders and followers, have "broadened themselves" toward a sense of their true participation in the experience of the simple festive crowd and in the larger community of which this crowd is the germ and symbol. The common people, the "Volk," already do belong together. It is the "silent congregation" of dissatisfied intellectuals, scattered about Europe, hardly even aware of each other, who have yet to learn to belong together; it is they who, in the Salzburg of the world-theater, are meant to discover both each other and the actual extent of the community they in truth represent, which does not yet really exist but is still necessary as a protective symbol of that universality of human being to which we of the present are otherwise mercilessly exposed. Community in Salzburg functions in the same way as society in *Der Schwierige*; it is a symbol that reveals the truth, but without forcing the individual into the position of a van Eeden or a Neuhoff, the untenable position of proclaiming the truth.[14] The difference is that Hofmannsthal now faces the need to accomplish what is already recognized in *Der Schwierige* as impossible, to *create* such a community anew.

Hence the relation between the *Großes Welttheater* and *Faust*. In the catastrophic atmosphere of German and Austrian life in the twentieth century, Goethe's work as a whole, and especially *Faust*, assumes importance as a solid cultural rock for the storms of the present to shatter on. Goethe represents the "West" as such, by contrast with Dostoyevsky's more "Eastern" affirmation of suffering, and Hofmannsthal concedes, "If our age has an intellectual ruler, it is Dostoyevsky" (P4 77). But still:

> as mysterious as Dostoyevsky is, Goethe is perhaps still more so; perhaps the Western secret is still more compact, the knot more tightly tied, than in the East. (P4 79)

For the poet interested in reintegrating this human mystery of Western or European culture, it is above all Goethe's work that must be carried on, in the form of radical parody if necessary, as in Mann's *Doktor Faustus*,[15] but carried on nonetheless. Especially a response to *Faust*, to "deutsche Humanität," to Goethe's huge

integration of Classical and Romantic, is necessary. And Hofmannsthal offers *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*, not a work of poetry but a culture-creating event, and a symbol of the culture-creating event that is Salzburg, an event directed not at the world in general but at a particular place and time, at real people, an event composed not of words as the vehicle of meaning, but of words in the sense of "the shadow that the deed casts in advance of itself" (W14 34; L4 433), words spoken not by an individual author to his readers, but by the whole of a nascent cultural unity, as the very action of its becoming.

That is to say, the *Großes Welttheater* is a *Faust* only by being an anti-*Faust*, a "taking back" of *Faust*, like Thomas Mann's. The parody in it of Goethe's "Prolog im Himmel" is obvious; and the Rich Man's exclusion is a negative image of Faust's salvation. *Faust* itself has become a cultural anchor only in the slow forge of history (P4 77); what is required now, in order to accomplish the same task of cultural consolidation, is not a work, like *Faust*, but an anti-work. The ultimate usefulness to Hofmannsthal of van Eeden and Volker, I think, is as an admonitory example of what must result from the attempt actually to *be* Faustian in the present age. The time for huge intellectual syntheses is past, and the attempt to revive it produces mere affectation, fanaticism, fragmentation. The time even for Nietzschean iconoclasm, for a radical criticism of intellectual tradition, is past.[16] And yet, neither Goethe nor Nietzsche need be rejected. The complexity, the "secret" of European culture is such that their achievements stand, and have significance for us, precisely *by* being past, by being tempered in history. The poet's task now is to discover what new form of cultural endeavor is needed in order to realize and develop existing cultural tradition, in order to maintain his difficult balance between leading and following, in order to shape the mysterious historical process while still belonging to it. And Hofmannsthal's struggle with this task leads him, in the *Großes Welttheater*, to a renunciation of poetry, a renunciation, altogether, of the "work," in favor of a commitment to community as such, community and nothing but, by way of the institution of Salzburg.

17

GOETHE, NIETZSCHE, THOMAS TAYLOR AND *DER TURM*

The relation between the *Großes Welttheater* and *Faust* brings us back to the importance of Goethe in Hofmannsthal's development. We have discussed the tension between the Goethean and the Kleistian; we have had occasion to mention *Wilhelm Meister, Werther, Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the correspondence with Schiller, and a parallel between *Tasso* and *Der Schwierige*; we might also have mentioned the confidence Hofmannsthal derived, in time of need, from Chamberlain's chapter on music and drama in Goethe.[1] But in connection with *Der Turm* Goethe takes on perhaps a greater importance for Hofmannsthal than ever, and not only by way of particular works.

I

In 1925, the year the first version of *Der Turm* is published, we come upon a series of speech-notes in which Hofmannsthal presents himself as an older man, with many "disappointments" behind him (A 206), who is now attempting to make contact with a younger generation. The speech is entitled "Über Goethe oder über die Lebensalter" (A 205), and twice mentions a fragment of Alcmaeon, the full form of which (from Aristotle) is:

τοὺς ἀνθρώπους φησὶν Ἀλκμαίων διὰ τοῦτο ἀπόλλυσθαι, ὅτι οὐ δύνανται τὴν ἀρχὴν τῷ τέλει προσάψαι. (frag. 2 [Diels/Kranz])[2]

Alcmaeon says that men perish because they are unable to fasten their beginning to their end.

Two ideas are important here: first, that of "perishing," Hofmannsthal's fear, in connection with the cultural problem of *Der Schwierige* and the cultural mission of Salzburg, that the movement of history might render his life's work and his European commitment futile; second, the idea that the secret of overcoming

this danger is "connecting the end with the beginning" (A 206), which means the establishment of contact not only with young people but also with our own youth, as Goethe in the "Trilogie der Leidenschaft," by an "evocation of Werther," achieves "the ageless" (A 207). In the Goethe/Dostoyevsky essay of 1921, "Blick auf den geistigen Zustand Europas," Hofmannsthal had argued that Goethe's "unfolding as an intellectual power of the highest rank" (P4 77) is a slow historical process that will not be complete even a century after the man's death. In Goethe as an intellectual phenomenon there is a majestic permanence that Hofmannsthal, in the precarious Europe of the twenties, desires for himself; and in the speech-notes for the *Normaliens* he suggests that such permanence may be achieved by an artistic *Sich-Beieinanderhalten*, a rounding off of the career into totality by joining the end with the beginning.

It is in *Der Turm* that he attempts this feat. The *Großes Welttheater* is a rewriting of *Der Tor und der Tod*, but it also marks a development far beyond the earlier play, an attempt to create in the theater not an ideal community, and not even an empirically possible community like that suggested by *Theater in Versen* or the musical plays or *Der Schwierige*, but a fully *real* community at a specific place and time. *Der Turm*, on the other hand, shows hardly a trace of this development, and is a return to the problem of "World and Ego" (W1 42; G 73) or "World and Spirit" (P1 189) in close to pure form. Moreover, whereas the musical plays, *Der Schwierige*, and the *Großes Welttheater* represent various circumventions of the Sacramozo-problem, the problem of how truth may be stated directly, *Der Turm* is a direct assault on this problem. It is a return even further back than Sacramozo, an out-Lorising of Loris. Even in the early lyric poetry, there is an earnest desire to temper the visionary with a sense of the social; but in *Der Turm*, set off against the political logic of the submerged plot that holds the structure together, vision alone is uppermost, a vision of naked confrontation between ego and universe, opulently developed in language, character, and action, but never obscured.

The relation of *Der Turm* to the early work can be traced by reference to a book Hofmannsthal says he "needs very much" on January 13, 1923 (H/HvN, p. 151), Thomas Taylor's *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* (orig. 1790?), which is mentioned in a note from 1895:

> Poldy's [Andrian's] book. The book on the Eleusinian mysteries by Taylor. "Das Märchen der 672. Nacht." Rule of Narcissos, of St. Sebastian, of the princes Amgiad und Assad. νοήματα πρυτανεύοντα: the

beauty of souls, the sacred beauty of youth, the highest [beauty], of children, whose souls still repose deep and heavy in ὕλη.

ruunt animae, ruunt – –
Humans seek their soul and find life instead. (A 117)

The copy of Taylor Hofmannsthal saw in 1895, and perhaps a few years earlier, was probably not a first or second edition (1790, 1816) but a third (1875) or a fourth (1891).[3] I will refer to the fourth edition.

The strongest pattern of associations with Taylor in young Hofmannsthal is suggested by the figure of Narcissus. Taylor helps clear up not only the cryptic comment that humans seek their soul and find life instead, but also the letter of 1895 on Narcissus and on self-love as in truth a love of "life" or "God" (H/EKvB, p. 83). With the aid of Plotinus (*Enneads*, I, 6.8). Taylor interprets the myth of Narcissus "as an emblem of one who rushes to the contemplation of sensible (phenomenal) forms as if they were perfect realities, when at the same time they are nothing more than like beautiful images appearing in water, fallacious and vain" (Taylor, p. 43); and later he discusses the relation between Narcissus and the rape of Persephone:

Proserpina, therefore, or the soul, at the very instant of her descent into matter [the underworld], is, with the utmost propriety, represented as eagerly engaged in plucking this fatal flower [the narcissus]; for her faculties at this period are entirely occupied with a life divided about the fluctuating condition of body. (Taylor, p. 153)[4]

The myth of Narcissus represents for Taylor the descent of the pure soul into corrupt matter or ὕλη (Taylor, pp. 44, 56, etc.); hence Hofmannsthal's idea that humans, by seeking their soul (attempting to view themselves in their pure state, like Narcissus with his reflection), in the end actually find material existence ("das Leben").

But it is clear from the note, and clearer from the letter to Edgar Karg, that Hofmannsthal interprets the myth of Narcissus (and the concept ὕλη) positively. The soul's assumption of material existence is a "finding of life"; it may be a fall, but it is "the best way" to fall. Just such a positive attitude toward material existence, however, though not associated with the myth of Narcissus, becomes ever more prominent toward the end of Taylor's book. After quoting Claudian's description of Proserpine's garments (*De raptu*, II, 36–54), for example, Taylor remarks:

They [sun and moon, interpreted as images of fantasy and nature respectively] are likewise, with great propriety, described in their infantine

state: for these energies do not arrive to perfection previous to the sinking of the soul into the dark receptacle of matter. (Taylor, pp. 146–7)

And the association of the serpent or dragon with Demeter on her wanderings makes sense, "since as these animals put off their skins, and become young again, so the divisible life of the soul, falling into generation, is rejuvenized in its subsequent career" (Taylor, pp. 159–60). Implicit here is an idea of the soul's eternal cycle, of which the descent into matter is as integral a part as the re-ascent into purity (Taylor, p. 196).[5]

Still more striking, for one who has read Nietzsche, is Taylor's treatment of the prohibition of suicide in the *Phaedo* (62B; Taylor, pp. 65ff.). Taylor follows the commentary of Olympiodorus, whom he translates in part as follows: "It is unlawful, therefore, to destroy ourselves . . . because our body is Dionysiacal, or of the nature of Bacchus: for we are a part of him, since we are composed from the ashes, or sooty vapor of the Titans who tasted his flesh" (Taylor, p. 69).[6] The affirmation or at least acceptance of our material condition, in other words, is an act of Dionysian piety, for Dionysus Zagreus is both principle and emblem of the soul's distribution in generated nature: "the soul is particularly distributed into generation, after the manner of Dionysus or Bacchus"; "by the members of Dionysus being first boiled in water by the Titans, and afterward roasted by the fire, the outgoing or distribution of intellect into matter, and its subsequent returning from thence, is evidently implied" (Taylor, pp. 99, 194).

Even our material existence, therefore, is holy, and the connection with Narcissus is suggested by the repeated emphasis in Taylor upon Dionysus' mirror (Taylor, pp. 24, 188).[7] Especially the following reminds us of Narcissus: "For Dionysus or Bacchus because his image was formed in a mirror, pursued it, and thus became distributed into everything" (Taylor, p. 201). Dionysus, that is, by pursuing his mirror image, brings into existence the whole world of individuated reality, which then dreams of him as its divine origin; and on the plane of individual existence, correspondingly, "humans seek their soul," the human soul seeks to view itself as an image, which image can in turn be generated only in the body:

It is necessary, first of all, for the soul to place a likeness of herself in the body . . . Secondly, it is necessary for her to sympathize with the image, as being of like idea . . . In the third place, being situated in a divided nature, it is necessary that she should be torn in pieces, and fall into a last separation. (Taylor, pp. 200–1)

So humans, by seeking their soul, "find life." And that Hofmannsthal, in reading this passage, must think of Nietzsche, is guaranteed by Taylor's conclusion (from Olympiodorus) that after Dionysus had been dispersed into matter, "Apollo collected him and brought him up; being a deity of purification and the true savior of Dionysus" (Taylor, p. 201). By way of the image of the mirror, which relates Dionysus and Narcissus, and by way of the attitude of Dionysian affirmation that is suggested to a reader of Nietzsche by the linking of Dionysus and Apollo, a background of associations is established against which Hofmannsthal's affirmation of the Narcissistic in his letter to Karg makes perfect sense.

2

The usefulness of Taylor's treatment of Dionysus is still apparent in *Das Kleine Welttheater*, in the figure of the Madman with his mirror. We think especially of the Servant's description of the Madman's dual nature, at once self-dispersing and self-contained – "enormous yearning to squander himself for a beloved, and again regal aloneness" (W3 143; G 310) – which recalls Taylor's treatment of Dionysus as the dispersal of soul into matter while at the same time, like "the rising of the sun through the ocean" (Taylor p. 218), he remains an intact, glorified god above "the dark and fluctuating material receptacle" (Taylor, p. 219). Although the soul "is distributed into generation Dionysiacally" (Taylor, p. 99), still, "Dionysus, whom in this respect we resemble, is himself an *ephorus* or guardian deity, dissolving at his pleasure the bonds by which the soul is united to the body, since he is the cause of a parted life" (Taylor, pp. 199–200); and the Servant remarks correspondingly that the Madman claims to stay in his body only as a "game" (W3 146; G 313–14). That he thinks he can "dissolve at his pleasure" his bodily existence is confirmed by the Madman himself (W3 147–8; G 315).

Or to look back rather than forward from our reference point in 1895, it is possible that Hofmannsthal had already been thinking about Taylor in 1893, in the note on astonishment at existence in *Der Tor und der Tod*, which ends with the parenthesis, "Lösung des absoluten Idealismus" (W3 436; A 100), "solution of absolute idealism." Given the fairly clear reference in the term θαυμάζειν to Schopenhauer's essay "Ueber das metaphysische Bedürfnis des Menschen," we are inclined to take the word "Lösung" as referring to a solution of the idealist philosophical problem of "subject" vs.

"matter" which Schopenhauer presents in the essay "Zur idealistischen Grundansicht,"[8] also from the supplementary part of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. But what Hofmannsthal means, precisely, by the idea of a "solution," seems to have more to do with the following in Taylor:

> In the deepest reflections . . . all that we call external is only the material basis upon which our dreams are built; and the sleep that surrounds life swallows up life, – all but a dim wreck of matter, floating this way and that, and forever evanishing from sight. Complete the analysis, and we lose even the shadow of the external Present, and only the Past and the Future are left us as our sure inheritance. This is the first initiation, – the vailing (*muesis*) of the eyes to the external. But as *epoptae*, by the synthesis of this Past and Future in a living nature, we obtain a higher, an ideal Present, comprehending within itself all that can be real for us within us or without. This is the second initiation in which is unvailed to us the Present as a new birth from our own life. Thus the great problem of Idealism is symbolically solved in the Eleusinia. (Taylor, pp. 12–13)[9]

The problem of idealism as described here is clearly related to the problem of a Claudio, who, in excessive reflection, finds himself trapped between past and future with no sense of a solid present outward existence, a person whose life appears to him "a book, half of which we do not yet, and half of which we no longer, understand" (W3 66; G 204). And for Claudio, as for Taylor, the solution is not an escape from reflection (as if this were possible), but rather the obtaining of "a higher, an ideal Present," the recognition of "the highest and alone truly real reality" in the very "phantasms" that haunt the over-reflective state.

The problem of idealistic philosophy, a philosophy that understands that the whole of the apparent material world "is in the first instance only a *cerebral phenomenon* and burdened with so great and many and different *subjective* conditions that its supposed absolute reality vanishes,"[10] is that its adherent finds nothing but dreams and vague images of himself everywhere, no solid reality to hang on to. The reflective idealist is thus a kind of universal Narcissus, and Hofmannsthal reads Taylor to the effect that this individual must then strive somehow to realize Narcissus as Dionysus, to realize reflectiveness not as a passive state, but as an act by virtue of which the apparent world takes on the highest possible reality. It is by "seeking their soul," which is Taylor's Dionysian self-dispersal in matter, that humans are enabled to find life and reality and God.

This is the lesson Hofmannsthal learns from Taylor (or reads

into him, as the case may be), and it is a lesson he never forgets. Alewyn interprets the last paragraph of the sketch for *Der Priesterzögling – Monarchia solipsorum* (1919?) as reflecting the poet's renunciation of self-seeking aestheticism in favor of outward-directed social activity:[11]

> Final initiation, where the novice is directed out of the temple onto the bustling street, after a stern talk from a teacher he had never met before, in which he is told that mystical experience is debased to onanism if a strict relation to life is not sought. (D3 493)

In its context, however, this passage clearly represents the logical conclusion of a strictly idealistic education, an education including the "Mystery: knowledge of form by the contemplation of an apparently formless boulder." The aim of this visual exercise – which is also practiced by the Madman in *Das Kleine Welttheater* (W3 146; G 313) – is the idealist truth that everything that exists necessarily has form by virtue of its dependent relation to the subject who perceives it: *esse est percipi*. Once again, therefore, the logical result of an education toward the self is an arrival at reality. Claudio, when he is no longer merely confused by his life's tendency to disintegrate into a dream, but now actually begins to see ghosts, is undergoing what Hofmannsthal continued to recognize not as a withdrawal process but as a "process of rebirth" (A 175).

3

But what specific reason had Hofmannsthal, on January 13, 1923, for wanting to get his hands on a copy of Taylor? There is no doubt about what work he was occupied with. On January 2 he writes to Burckhardt that a few weeks' vacation from his disturbed inner state might help him "achieve the fifth act of the tragedy [Trauerspiel]" (H/CJB, p. 115). And on January 23 he writes to Andrian that he is more worried than ever about his ability to complete the same task (H/LvA, p. 342). This task, for which Hofmannsthal feels he needs assistance, this "Trauerspiel," is *Der Turm*.

It is fairly clear why he should therefore be interested in looking at Taylor again. In the first place, the idea of earthly life as a troubled dream of the soul occurs over and over in Taylor, and its consequences are worked out in numerous images (Taylor, pp. 26, 36, 39–40, 45, 59, 81, 145, etc.). The original conception of *Der Turm* as *Das Leben ein Traum* is in fact part of the Narcissus-

pattern discussed above. In a letter of 1904 to Hermann Bahr, Hofmannsthal says specifically:

> In the material that now most attracts me, *Das Leben ein Traum*, it is a question of descending into the deepest depths of the subterranean kingdom "ego," and finding there the no-longer-ego or the world. (B2 155)

The connection would be fairly obvious even without this letter. By contemplating the idealist truth that life is a dream, Calderon's Segismundo learns precisely how to deal with reality.

In the second place, the Eleusinian procedure of first submerging the novice in darkness and then exposing him to dazzling visions of the truth (see Taylor, pp. 17–18) is parallel to the "initiation" Sigismund undergoes, his period of oblivion under the drug, followed by undreamt-of revelations; the parallel is emphasized by Hofmannsthal's innovation, in both *Das Leben ein Traum* and *Der Turm*, of having Sigismund drink the potion knowingly (D3 377–8; D4 94–6), unlike Calderon's Segismundo. And in *Der Turm*, as the doctor has promised, the immediate effect of the drug is a violent unfolding of "the spirit of this chosen one" (D4 53). An inspired Sigismund now speaks of an ever present eternity in the incorruptible soul, of the mysterious union of soul and body that also contains "the four ends of the world," and of the consequent necessity of evil and suffering in the human condition, the "secret thought" shared by angels and devils (D4 98). That is, he is inwardly initiated into the occult meaning of the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries; he grasps and accepts both "the miseries of the soul while in subjection to the body" and "the felicity of the soul both here and hereafter, when purified from the defilements of a material nature, and constantly elevated to the realities of intellectual (spiritual) vision" (Taylor, p. 87). He thus becomes actually a "mystic" before becoming etymologically so, before closing his eyes (μύω).

And in the third place, the figure of the child-king as a "continuation" of Sigismund (A 240) probably has to do with the image of Dionysus, torn apart as an infant (compare Sigismund's original imprisonment and Taylor, p. 190) but "destined to be again born, to succeed to universal rule, establish the reign of happiness, and release all souls from the dominion of death" (Taylor, p. 24). The connection between Sigismund and Dionysus, in any case, is also evident from the repetition, in Anton and the Doctor (who form Sigismund's essential entourage throughout), of the Bacchic Madman's two attendants in *Das Kleine Welttheater*.

Not only in *Der Turm*, but also in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and the *Großes Welttheater*, in the theme of the unborn soul's passage into life, Hofmannsthal concerns himself with questions that had earlier arisen in connection with his reading of Taylor, especially the question of why the pure soul should be imprisoned in material life in the first place, to which his earlier answer had been derived from the figure of Narcissus–Dionysus. The soul, in contemplating itself, undergoes a Dionysian dispersal by which the material world comes into being, and this dispersal is an integral part of the eternal cycle that is the soul's true nature; Dionysus is both the way up and the way down.[12] Our existence in the material world is not really an imprisonment but in truth, as for the Madman, a free and active *imitatio Bacchi*. And especially in *Der Turm*, the Dionysian cycle of the soul is also mirrored in the cycle of the poet's life, in a return of the latest thinking to the earliest, in a Goethean fastening of the end to the outset.

4

There is no evidence that in 1923 Hofmannsthal succeeded in retrieving his copy of Taylor, nor is any such evidence needed for my argument. The ideas from Taylor suggested by *Der Turm* are ideas that Hofmannsthal had made fully his own anyway, in such works as *Der Tor und der Tod* and *Das Kleine Welttheater*. What troubles him in 1923 is the detailed execution of a conception that is already more or less formed, and what he apparently hopes to find in Taylor are actual phrases, images, motifs by which this conception, especially Act v, might be filled out.[13]

But it is possible that he has in mind something more specific than just the connection with his own early thinking on Dionysus–Narcissus or the cycle of the soul. Taylor quotes Theon of Smyrna to the effect that:

> philosophy may be called the initiation into true sacred ceremonies, and the instruction in genuine Mysteries; for there are five parts of initiation: the first of which is the previous purification; for neither are the Mysteries communicated to all who are willing to receive them; but there are certain persons who are prevented by the voice of the crier (κηρυξ, *kerux*), such as those who possess impure hands and an inarticulate voice ... but after purification, the reception of the sacred rites succeeds. The third part is denominated *epopteia*, or reception [revelation?]. And the fourth, which is the end and design of the revelation, is (the investiture) the binding of the head and fixing of the crowns. The initiated person is, by this means,

authorized to communicate to others the sacred rites in which he has been instructed . . . But the fifth, which is produced from all these, is *friendship and interior communion with God*, and the enjoyment of that felicity which arises from intimate converse with divine beings.

(Taylor, pp. 82–5)[14]

I do not think it is necessary to show that Hofmannsthal had a copy of Taylor in his possession in order to argue that Theon's description of the process of initiation is reflected in the disposition of motifs in *Der Turm*. Act I shows Sigismund unpurified, and contains the repeated warning that unauthorized persons must remain apart; in Act II the idea of Sigismund's "reception" of sacred knowledge figures prominently, in the description of his education by Julian and in the inspired knowledge he receives from the potion; Act III, in which Sigismund's eyes are opened to his true condition, is clearly *epopteia*; in Act IV we witness Sigismund's literal "investiture" (D4 165) and the beginning of his worldly mission; and in Act V the idea of felicity in communion with God is suggested by Sigismund's final reconciliation with his fate: "Mir ist viel zu wohl zum Hoffen" (D4 202), "I feel much too good for hoping."

Given the accuracy with which Hofmannsthal was generally able to remember a text years after reading it, there is no reason to assume that this parallel between *Der Turm* and Theon via Taylor is accidental. Hofmannsthal had at least twice before attempted to create something like a Nietzschean–Dionysian theater, in *Der Tor und der Tod* and in *Ariadne*; and in the development of his idea of the figure of Sigismund, away from Calderon's ultimately regenerate boor toward the born priest-king whose true nature is manifest even in abject degradation, it occurs to him to structure the whole tragedy as a Dionysian initiation. In 1923, however, when he arrives at a creative impasse, he wishes to see if perhaps Taylor, his remembered source for the initiation motif, can provide suggestions for details.[15]

The question of why Hofmannsthal should incorporate the pattern of Bacchic initiation into *Der Turm*, moreover, is one we have already to an extent answered, in connection with the Sacramozo-problem; for the relation between an *imitatio Bacchi* and an ability to articulate metaphysical truth is already established in the figure of the Madman. Sigismund goes even further in this respect; while the Madman is content to describe his "office" as "to lead the whole round dance of reality" (W3 148; G 316), Sigismund repeatedly insists that the whole world is *contained* within him:

"Here within are the four ends of the world"; and when the boy-king arrives, "What wakes me again! Who still dwells in me, whom I do not know?" (D4 205). In fact Sigismund often recalls the monomania of the Rich Man in the *Großes Welttheater*: "Ich bin jetzt da! Alles andere ist Gewölle, wie es die Krähen ausspeien! – Ich bin da! – Ich will!" (D4 124); "Es ist niemand da außer mir!" (D4 202).

But whereas the Rich Man is a negative figure, at least with respect to the Christ-like aspect of humanity, and whereas the Madman is treated with irony, Sigismund, without question, is meant to function simply as a hero; his is meant to be perceived as what the doctor calls, "The ultimate courage . . . that glorious and still humble self-love . . . that magnificent virtue from which an eternal youth flows into every fiber" (D4 44), a self-love so enormous as to be good and fruitful, like Hans Karl's. But unlike Hans Karl, Sigismund is also a speaker of absolute truth, a hero of the intellect striving to assert intellectual order in reality, with no regard for established forms: "I presume to combine in this existence both the act of ordering and a leaving behind of the old order" (D4 197). His speeches are not attenuated by self-mockery; his thoughts do not appear "bizarre" to him. He simply insists on his quality as the man-god, the representative of humanity as a whole, the center and source of order in existence. Can the apparently impossible creative synthesis thus suggested actually be achieved?

5

The question whether Hofmannsthal *does* succeed at the task he sets himself in *Der Turm* seems to me beyond the reach of criticism. But we may ask, more precisely, whether the task is theoretically a reasonable one, and whether it is more or less consistently carried out. At least the means employed are extremely simple. The Madman, the Rich Man, and Sacramozo (and perhaps Death in *Der Tor und der Tod*), Hofmannsthal's earlier speakers of truth, are all introduced into developed poetic situations by which an ironic perspective upon them is given from the beginning. For metaphysical truth is expressible only by way of irony or indirection; as straightforward philosophical doctrine the truth becomes contradictory, since the act of formulating it conflicts with its own ethical consequences, with our obligation to be "good actors," to enact willingly the finitude and absurdity of our condition. The

usefulness of fictional or poetic form, therefore, is that it interposes an ironic distance between truth and the recipient, incorporates truth into an established game of conventions rather than simply present it as a statement. But in the case of *Der Turm* this ironic attenuation of truth is minimized. Sigismund is not placed into a situation, but rather he *is* the fictional situation from the outset. Everything revolves around him; the play is practically nothing but a vehicle for his figure, his words, his gestures.[16]

What we see at the beginning is what the doctor sees, "an animal squatting on the ground" (D4 21); and although we have heard, from the indiscreet Olivier, that the prisoner is in fact a "Prince" (D4 11), we are entirely unprepared for the conclusions the doctor draws from his examination. On the basis not of what he has heard but only of what he has seen ("Ich schließe nichts aus der Nachricht, alles aus dem Eindruck" [D4 33]), which is no more than we have seen, the doctor insists:

> Here, if God does not prevent it, the royal blood is being murdered. At the point where this life is torn out by its roots, a vortex will appear and sweep us all with it ... The person whom I have seen is of supreme nobility and chosen for the greatest things. Never have I been more certain of standing humbly in a noble presence. My knees wanted to bend. I had to hold myself strongly in check. (D4 31, 33)

At this point, when all we know about either the doctor or Sigismund is that the former is a man of science, there is no way to make any sense of these assertions save by accepting them as a set of dramatic axioms. Regardless of what our eyes tell us, Sigismund, for the purposes of the play, simply *is* "a quinta essentia of the highest earthly forces" (D4 33), a Pythagorean fifth essence beyond the material four, by which we are here meant to understand the intellectual or the *human* as such, "Adam, firstborn son of the highest king" (D4 30). Julian attempts to explain Sigismund as a mere phenomenon, "a victim of coincidences," and takes credit himself for keeping Sigismund alive; but the doctor answers, "He would be as much alive without you as without me, and when his time comes he will go forth and be our lord. That is the sense of the coincidences" (D4 33). Sigismund is man in the pure state, as the creator and governor of existence, and the apparent outward coincidences of his life are in truth but the instruments of his divinity; what appears as world is in truth his own will within him. Behind his statements in the fourth stage of initiation, in which he is ordained as a teacher, behind such idealistic reflections as, "We

know of no thing how it is, and there is nothing of which we can say that it is different in nature from our dreams" (D4 154), stands the truth that for Sigismund, for man in the pure state, life *is* a dream, an order created by his own mental activity.

The theater of *Der Turm* is thus a theater of revealed truth, but not a theater of naked truth in the same sense as that of the Electra and Oedipus tragedies, for Sigismund's is not an intellectual *existence*. The tragedy of intellectual existence involves an indispensable element of duration in time, whereas Sigismund, at least until he begins to operate in Act v, is a man without a past, who stands outside the "coincidences" of existence. He is Adam and Kaspar Hauser and Blake's Albion rolled into one, sheer human individuality faced with the unutterable chaos of sheer Being:

> The whole world is just enough to fill up our mind when from our secure house we look out at it through a small peephole. But woe, when the dividing wall collapses! (D4 26)

The explanation of Sigismund as a product of his past is simply denied. The submerged plot, the realistically cohesive mechanism of Sigismund's existence, proceeds side by side with the Bacchic initiation that is Sigismund's being, but the two do not really touch ("Du hast mich nicht" [D4 160]) except for a short while in Act v, whereupon in the ghost scene, with the collapse of space and time, they again separate. Existence is revealed as a mere shadow of Being; it serves its purpose and is discarded.

I say that Sigismund *is* human individuality in its divine state. What this actually means is that he is *presented* thus, that we understand this to be the intention embodied in him. Nothing that happens on the stage can convince us that Sigismund is actually what the doctor says he is. The question of conviction, or artistic illusion, does not arise; Sigismund's quality as man-god, as representing the human essence, is simply insisted on as a postulate. But if we ask yet once more that extremely fruitful question, the question of what we are doing in the theater, it perhaps follows that we do not need to be convinced. In watching and understanding the play, we are challenged intellectually precisely by the *lack* of a connection between the enacted figure of Sigismund and the arbitrarily asserted meaning of Sigismund. This lack, moreover, is a uniquely *theatrical* experience. For the reader, the character Sigismund and the metaphysical symbol Sigismund are both constituted as verbally conditioned patterns of thought and imagination, hence easily enough connected with each other in the encompassing

verbal medium of their existence; only for the spectator, confronted by a physically present actor, "solid as ebony" (D4 98), of whom it is nonetheless asserted that his being contains "the four ends of the world," is the gulf, the riddle, the problem of Sigismund insisted upon in all its intensity.[17] And to the extent that we concern ourselves with this problem, we find that we are concerned with the problem of human being in general. That is, we are attempting to achieve an empirical understanding of the divine in ourselves, which is precisely what Sigismund attempts to do in his constant striving to come to grips actively and verbally with his own infinite being. This mirroring of the spectator's situation on the stage, simple as it is, is the key to the play's inner structure.

To put it differently, the play *interprets* our situation in the auditorium as a struggle with the problem of human nature in ourselves. At the beginning we are presented not with a character in a situation but with a riddle, in the form of an utterly abject creature who is nevertheless solemnly proclaimed "our lord," the embodiment of the divine in man. And as this creature then gradually becomes a dramatic character, his fate turns out to be a struggle with just this riddle, with the problem of bridging the gap between divine and human: first by formulating it in the inspiration of Act II; then by insisting on absolute power in Act III; then, in Act IV, by learning the Beggar's lesson, that the divine power in man exists only by being sacrificed, only on condition that it is contained and realized as a purely inner state; and finally, in Act V, by accepting the truth that freedom as an inner state is not sufficient, that "The spirit must step forth into life,"[18] that even the purified power born of self-containment entails a responsibility for its use in the real world, for its assertion as real power, even though this commitment to reality leads as inevitably to ruin as the rash self-assertion of Act III had.

That is, *Der Turm* interprets the theater, all theater, as a temple of Bacchic initiation. What we require of the theater is that truth be revealed to us in concrete images and speeches, that the metaphysical and the phenomenal be symbolically joined before us, so that not only the nature of the symbol but its very existence becomes pregnant with the idea of a union of human and divine, of finite and infinite. The symbol actually presented us in *Der Turm*, however, has exactly the structure of the Bacchic initiation we ourselves are meant to be undergoing, which implies, yet again, that the process of initiation and the object or goal of initiation are identical, that precisely the process of inner initiation for which our

mundane existence is merely the excuse or vehicle (as the submerged plot of the play is the excuse or vehicle for Sigismund's initiation), precisely our endless struggle to comprehend the divine in ourselves, *is* the divine in us, as in Sigismund.

Hence also the combination Dionysus–Narcissus, the god with the mirror who is a god precisely by virtue of his mirror, even though his mirror effects his dismemberment. As we grow aware that the character Sigismund operates principally as a spectator to his own incomprehensible divinity, as a projection onto the stage of our actual situation in the theater, it also becomes clear to us that the play's original arbitrary assertion of Sigismund's divine humanity refers to just this quality as spectator, this desire to know the unknowable. As Death had said over three decades earlier:

> Wie wundervoll sind diese Wesen,
> Die, was nicht deutbar, dennoch deuten,
> Was nie geschrieben wurde, lesen,
> Verworrenes beherrschend binden
> Und Wege noch im Ewig-Dunkeln finden.
>
> (W3 79–80; G 220)

How wonderful are these [human] beings, who take what is not interpretable and interpret it anyway, who read what was never written, who imperiously bind confused things, and still find paths in the Eternally-Dark.

What distinguishes mankind is not the mystery of his being in some factual or objectively ascertainable sense, but rather his desire to know and realize his mystery, a desire that on the one hand is absurdly hopeless, since there is no intelligible or realizable mystery except the desire itself, but on the other hand, and for the same reason, is eternally fulfilled.

In *Der Turm*, however, as I have said, Hofmannsthal out-Lorises Loris, for the complex psychology and irony of the early poems and *Der Tor und der Tod* have now given way, despite the length and metaphorical weight of the later play, to a radical simplicity and directness. Now the idea that the anguished groping of self-consciousness is not a violation of our nature but the very expression and testimony of the divine in us, now this defense of human life against Kleist is simply asserted as a myth, "The individual and the epoch seen as myth" (A 233), a new myth, a new constellation in the chaotic mental heaven of an age that confusedly imagines that its intense self-consciousness has rendered mythical being impossible.

Hofmannsthal himself, in the tragedies of naked truth, had

engaged in the typically modern exercise of mythologizing the collapse of myth, dramatizing the death of drama, staging the futility of the theater, turning intellect against itself and arriving, by something like the verbal mathematics of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, at the result of "silence," the concept with which, going beyond Sophocles, he summarizes his *Oedipus the King*. But *Der Turm* is not silent at all. It does nothing but talk, nothing but formulate, nothing but assert. Hence Hofmannsthal's need not only of the model from Calderon, but also of Nietzsche, and of the personal model of Goethe, and of the details of Taylor's description of Bacchic initiation. *Der Turm* is not conceived as a dramatic action to which meaning naturally and gradually accrues; it is conceived as nothing but meaning, assertion, truth, the mythical figure of Sigismund, which needs to be ballasted with concrete material, with reference and allusion and tradition, in order to exist and be manifest. Even the pattern of intellectual tragedy, the theater of naked truth, is incorporated into *Der Turm*, in the gypsy scene where Sigismund commits himself to the application of metaphysical knowledge in mundane practice and so receives his death. And in *Der Turm*, even the pattern of intellectual tragedy becomes translucent, its gloom of despair suffused with the glow of mythical self-certainty, for Sigismund's death has become a formality, the joyful passage from sight to vision, in the person of the boy-king.

Der Turm, in the 1925 version, is not only a closing of the circle, but a retracing of the circle, a transfiguration of Hofmannsthal's development. Even its most basic technique, the simple assertion of Sigismund's symbolic quality, rather than any attempt to let that quality grow from the development of the fiction, is a technique we have already encountered in *Der Schwierige*, where Hans Karl's quality as the perfect social individual is asserted in the same way. In fact even the *Widersacher*, the *bête noire* of Hofmannsthal's youth, Heinrich von Kleist, is now rescued and transfigured. For the play in earlier German literature that *Der Turm* most closely resembles – the straightforwardly mythopoietic drama of a young hero whose heroic quality is merely asserted, and who must find his way to himself through a confusion of dream and reality – is certainly *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*.[19]

6

Neither these considerations, however, nor *Der Turm* itself, can negate or circumvent the inherent ambivalence and anguish of

self-consciousness, the terror of nothingness that goes together with our self-conscious sense of separation from ourselves. Brother Ignatius comments on the double sense of the word "eitel," "vain," which means: "boasting before oneself, being a spectator to oneself, committing intellectual fornication with oneself," and also, "null, for nothing, already lost in the womb" (D4 70). But it is then Brother Ignatius himself who makes the point that the basic principle of our self-conscious existence, our situation as spectators to ourselves, even in its terrifying aspect, is God:

> You scream: it is behind your scream and compels you and commands you to hear your scream, to feel your body, to test your body's weight, to perceive your body's gesture, like a rolling of snakes with a whip-end, to inhale your own rotting, to smell your stink, ear behind the ear, nose behind the nose. It despairs behind your despair, terrifies you behind your terror, and does not release you from yourself, for it knows you and wants to punish you: that is God! (D4 75)

The principle of divine self-assertion inherent in our conscious existence is also always a merciless self-punishment, the rendering incomprehensible of precisely the mystery it exists in order to comprehend – which punishment, however, is itself an expression of the divine in us. "Der Mensch ist eine einzige Herrlichkeit, und er hat nicht zuviel Leiden und Schmerzen, sondern ihrer zu wenig" (D4 99), "Man is a unique glory, and he has not too many sufferings and pains, but too few," is Sigismund's own answer (if borrowed from Büchner), in the next scene, to the ex-cardinal's attack on the self.

A clear parallel is in fact established, in the play's structure, between the two main examples of flawed or problematic self-consciousness, Julian, whose condition is diagnosed by the Doctor in Act I, and Basilius, who in Act II, in the scene immediately following, undergoes a diagnosis by Brother Ignatius. Both Julian and Basilius are creators, and their creations are the same. Julian has deliberately created for himself both Sigismund and Olivier, as means to power, whereas Basilius, as Sigismund's bodily father and as the author of the irresponsible policies that give Olivier his popular following, has created the same two figures involuntarily. Basilius, who in his blindness fears precisely the highest thing he has brought forth, is the less enlightened of the two, a representative of that ignorance by which the true mental seat of divinity in us becomes merely terror; but Julian's end, his denial of Sigismund and his death upon the word "Nichts!" (D4 159), "nothing," is not essentially better. All human life, whether ignorantly self-indulgent

("Dein Wollen sitzt unter dem Nabel" [D4 70]) or titanically self-denying ("diese Hände, die sich Weib und Kind zu berühren versagen" [D4 43]), is a creating of both the highest and the lowest, both Sigismund and Olivier, both Emanation and Spectre, both order, which is the articulating act of creation itself, and chaos, which receives its power precisely from the existence of order, as its adversary. If "the silent, transcendent language" of van Eeden and Volker exists,[20] then it must be, as dead Julian says, a language "that says the Upper and Lower together" (D4 186). When we enter the theater and open before ourselves a stage radically dedicated to the expression of truth, we necessarily enact both the divine and the chaotic in our nature, both our greatest glory and our most abject helplessness, which between them comprise exactly Sigismund's fate as we see it unfold. When Sigismund asks, "Wer wohnt noch in mir," this might be our question as well, for all of the play's figures do dwell within us by virtue of our situation in the theater, which is our enactment of the human as such, our probing of the mystery. Again, the mystery *is* the probing of the mystery.

The parallel between Julian and Basilius, however, is especially significant because it indicates that our existence is always the creating of exactly the same pair of opposed essences, regardless of whether we carry out this creation deliberately (Julian) or simply blind ourselves to its inevitability (Basilius). This is the sense of Brother Ignatius' words, "No one escapes the great ceremony, but the king and the father is placed in the center!" (D4 73). Our consciousness or ignorance of our condition makes no difference whatever, even in the case of Sigismund, the chosen vessel of initiation. Although Olivier, in Act IV, carries out a grotesque continuation of Sigismund's seizure of power in Act III, and so provides an unmistakable lesson, still Sigismund in his turn has no choice but to disregard that lesson, to become "ein General" (D4 187) himself, in his turn, with plans and policies and dreams that are perhaps an infinite sublimation of Olivier's, but are every bit as futile in the end.

And this idea – that our consciousness of our situation makes no difference whatever in our situation itself, that our consciousness, rather, simply *is* our situation, that the mirror is reality, even for dull Basilius who experiences his self-reflecting as a vengeful God – this idea is the solution of the Sacramozo-problem, which now turns out to be no problem at all. After his excursions into the complexity of the social and the cultural, Hofmannsthal now as it were pulls himself together and realizes in unprecedented purity his own

earlier thinking, his understanding that self-consciousness is not a weakness but a power, by which even our transience and ultimate destruction become truly our own. It simply is not necessary that the truth, in order to generate a valid artistic structure, cloak itself in impenetrable irony; nor is it necessary that the fictional speaker of truth stand somehow outside of life. The active or verbal *assertion* of truth (as distinct from the experience of truth, in the ghost scene for example) is not an avoidance of ethical commitment, but rather is itself the most radical commitment possible to the contradictoriness and complexity of life; it does not confuse our fate but rather purifies it, by the degrees of the scale: Olivier, Basilius, Julian, Sigismund. The assertion of truth, like the word "I . . . that abominable expression of pride" (D4 67), or like the tower itself, is a "center of world-injustice" (D3 426), for it is an outrage, it is the assertion that cannot be made; and yet, by being made anyway, it is not merely an acceptance of injustice, like the Beggar's, but rather an assertion and transfiguration of injustice, a joyful insistence upon injustice, the realization of our suffering itself as an instrument of divine will, "suffering as a divine principle" (P3 381).

Systematic metaphysical formulation is contradictory as an endeavor and therefore idle, in the sense that in order to be valid, it presupposes for the speaker an infinite, detached point of view that is denied him by precisely the truth it formulates. But if the question of validity is left aside, it turns out that the direct formulation of truth is *identical* with the commitment to life and finitude that the truth requires of us; precisely the contradictoriness of the formulative act anticipates and represents the existential absurdity to which a Claudio or a Sigismund is obliged to commit himself. Hofmannsthal spends much of his career attempting to set up a fictional or theatrical or cultural or poetic situation in which the valid speaking of truth will become possible by way of a complex irony. But now he reverses and radically simplifies this procedure. Now, in *Der Turm*, the staging of truth, the outright assertion of a symbol of human divinity, itself *creates* the committed, finite, helplessly doomed situation that truth requires, and creates it not only on the stage, but – by our understanding and so participating in the statement of truth – in the auditorium as well. I say "understanding and so participating," for as soon as we understand fully what is being said in this theater, we also understand that it has no right to be said. And what else is our discomfort at hearing what ought not to be said, if not a sense of being implicated in the speaking?

All human existence is tragic, all striving futile; even in the midst of our striving we know this, by way of precisely the "fear of dying and leaving nothing behind" (D4 133) that spurs us on. But existence expressed in the simple, if impermissible assertion of truth is also joyful, like dancing Electra, except that in *Der Turm*, by the use of an arbitrary assertion of truth as the play's very hypothesis, in the form of the riddle of Sigismund's existence, this cathartic joy is made directly available to the audience. In speaking his last words, "Here I am, Julian!" (D4 207), Sigismund both acknowledges and transfigures Julian's own final perception of Nothingness; he commits himself to the deep of chaos, but in the very act of doing so, "Here I am," he also distinguishes himself from it, and so carries out yet once more the basic self-contradictory self-assertion which is human being. He confronts utter nothingness, but he also calls it by name, "Julian," and so insists that the inevitable tragic pattern of human existence, the pattern named both "Julian" and "Sigismund" ("Ein furchtbares Wort" [D4 93]), itself represents the giving of a shape to nothingness, thus an intellectual victory, the overcoming or transfiguration of chaos, which is also what is accomplished, by the shape of the symbol and of our thinking relation to it, in the theater as this play interprets it for us.

7

For the time being, only the question of distribution of functions remains. I have argued that *Der Schwierige* represents a recognition that the form of comedy is better employed as an attack on the petrifaction of social forms than as a defense against their fragmentation. And I have shown, I think, that the corresponding argument for tragedy, if it can be made, will move in the opposite direction, that tragedy must function not as a problematizing of its society, but as a preserving and sanctioning of established usages. In any case, an argument of this sort is not primarily concerned with society as depicted or discussed in the play. The question is always: how does the play actually function in the society for which it is performed? And the answer to this question is not likely to be provided by a simple correspondence between the fictional social situation and a particular reality. In fact, in *Der Schwierige*, which tends to problematize its actual society, the emphasis within the fiction is strongly on established form; very little room is given to revolutionary or reformist sentiments. I maintain, correspond-

ingly, that although established form counts for practically nothing in the fiction of *Der Turm*, where a central theme is the radical reordering of communal human existence, still the envisaged function of the work in reality is to defend existing order against the danger of fragmentation.

The operation of the intellect is generally disruptive with respect to particular social forms. The intellectual ordinarily adopts a critical attitude toward such forms and submits to them only provisionally, only until the opportunity for improving them seems to present itself; at the very least, like Neuhoff, he dismisses social form as such, fails to invest it with the "redoubled" intellectual concentration that is in truth necessary for its maintenance. And in Hofmannsthal's view, a principal danger in the Europe of war and postwar is the overintellectual focus on a general philosophical sense of human being, the merciless exposure of the individual to mankind's tragic situation in existence, rather than his enfolding within an accepted cultural or social order. Hence the Salzburg project; if the national societies of Europe can no longer hold together, then Europe itself will have to be realized as a "symbolic" social entity. The essence of Salzburg, the center of its experience, in the *Großes Welttheater*, is therefore an enormous self-sacrifice on the part of intellect, our acknowledgment that the whole of our subtlest philosophy, our idealism, from the Hermetic to the Nietzschean, is contained in the words, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!"

But can this sacrifice reasonably be expected? Is it even necessary? In the artistic mechanism of *Der Turm*, it appears that the *Großes Welttheater* is entirely superseded, for the direct assertion of metaphysical truth is now itself understood as a form of commitment to human particularity and finitude; the self-sacrifice of intellect is carried out precisely in the exercise of intellect. But still, can such a commitment to human finitude as such, in the abstract, do duty for the commitment to what happens to be our actual communal condition? Will the universally critical attitude, which makes intellect a disruptive force in society, not persist in the process of a commitment based on the assertion of absolute truth? In Sigismund, after all, this attitude does persist: "I do not wish to be lord in the forms that are customary and comfortable to you, but in forms that astound you" (D4 199).

Clearly the abstract idea of commitment is not the same thing as a willing acceptance of actual social norms and usages. But then the abstract idea of commitment, as it appears from the perspective of a critical discussion, is not what we are offered in the theater of

Hofmannsthal's tragedy. In that theater, if the above argument holds, we are invited to undergo, as a kind of initiation, the *immediate experience* of a commitment to human finitude that arises directly out of the clearest possible knowledge of the infinite in our nature. "No one escapes the great ceremony." Everything we do or think or say expresses a commitment of ourselves to finitude and mortality. Neither the ruthlessly self-blunted sensibilities of the ex-student Olivier nor the correspondingly refined sensibilities developed by Sigismund in his various ordeals can possibly avoid the being of what humanity after all is. We ourselves, even in understanding the play, even in the darkened auditorium, cannot but participate, and see our participation reflected everywhere about us – in the plunging of the actor of Sigismund into the character Sigismund, and vice versa, in the infinite Sigismund's entrapment in the mere actor; in our fellow spectators, vague physical objects yet each a site of our own understanding and experience; in the child-king and his followers, themselves detached spectators of the great tragic spectating that is the play's action, and who gather Sigismund to themselves, as a talisman for their new community, at the very point where we too must leave the theater. There is no such thing as individuality. The individuality, for instance, that must inevitably be retained by a solitary reader of the text, simply does not happen. In this theater, our commitment to the individual, the finite, the mortal, has become ceremony, pure participation, precisely in being the fullest possible expression of speculative intellect.

And this experience, this attitude, in turn, is not a retreat from the uncompromising intellectual relativization of social forms – such as is suggested for the intellectual spectator at the *Großes Welttheater* – but a surpassing of it. From the vantage point provided us in the theater of *Der Turm*, all particular social forms become trivial, the differences among them inconsequential; even Sigismund's plans for reorganizing the world are no longer of any special significance. The great ceremony, which the theater gives us in a purified state, is always carried out, in whatever forms, whether we will or no. The theater operates against social fragmentation by leaving behind, not by avoiding, the negatively critical *use* of intellect that produces such fragmentation. Even the intellectual disregard of social forms is left behind, for the striving intellect has now received a new *goal*, in the theatrical ceremony of participation. Social forms, paradoxically, are inconsequential yet still important, whatever forms, whatever means of achieving commu-

nal cohesion, are needed for the *actual* organization and enactment (since the idea is not enough) of the ceremony in which precisely intellectual existence finds its highest fulfilment.

At least it seems to me fairly clear that in *Der Turm*, this is the radically simple conclusion Hofmannsthal arrives at concerning the modern function of tragedy. Intellect *is* commitment, and the imagined obligation of the intellectual either to sacrifice his speculation or to detach himself from society vanishes.

18

A TOWER IN RUINS: THE TRAGEDY OF A TRAGEDY

I do not mean that the 1925 version of *Der Turm* definitively satisfies some valid set of abstract or traditional requirements for tragedy. The requirements imposed on any poetic form by a critical thought that has enough philosophical ambition to be interesting are not such that they *can* be satisfied. Especially in *Der Turm*, which raises the question of the manner in which a spectator experiences his own critical understanding, and the question of the communal experience of the theater as ritual, both the creation of the work and its critical discussion must become speculative, tentative endeavors. It is not remarkable, therefore, that Hofmannsthal himself grows uncertain about the first large version of his tragedy. What disturbs us, in watching him pull down that edifice, is not the fact itself so much as our general theoretical perception of the fragility and mutability of precisely those constructs by which we imagine we establish an enduring presence in whatever huge twilight our experience of time belongs to.

I

In his essay on *Der Turm*, Rey says of the long 1925 version (*Turm 1*):

> Sigismund's death and the child-king's arrival mark the transition from history to utopia. This transition is carried out so hastily that the historical confirmation of Sigismund's life's work no longer even appears as a problem.[1]

Rey is correct in noting the haste he speaks of here, but this very perception makes questionable the conclusion he draws from it. It is true that the arrival of the "Kinderkönig" is clearly not part of the plot's necessary unfolding, but an instance of *deus ex machina* which "ties up all threads, but without necessarily solving anything";[2] and it is true that the ending thus presents the reader or

spectator with a problem. But does this mean that from the author's point of view it is merely the *avoidance* of a problem?

Rey does not admit the possibility of irony, of a suggestion that the spectator must see beyond the text, at the end of *Turm 1*:

> This question of the possibility of intellectual world-shaping [Weltgestaltung] is answered affirmatively in *Turm 1*. Here Sigismund, the representative of pure spirit in a world torn apart by the will to power, steps out of the tower of his inwardness and decides the fate of the age by political and military action. (p. 166)

But "deciding the fate of the age" is just what Sigismund fails to do, at least in practice. The long and detailed speech that closes with the words, "I will mix you little peoples anew in a great mixing vessel" (D4 198), is spoken, like Hamlet's last speech, *after* the mortal wound has been received; it is spoken by a dead man, and the projects articulated in it are shot through with futility in their very conception. Sigismund turns out to have been "only an intermediate king" (D4 206), and his plans for a new political world-order are conspicuously absent in the speeches of his successor, the boy-king, who has nothing more specific to say about his policies than, "We have built foundries and keep fire in the forge and beat the swords into ploughshares" (D4 206). With Sigismund's death we enter a dream-world; and the apparent need for this utopian vision, in order to end the play, at least calls into question the "intellectual world-shaping" Rey speaks of.

Rey quotes the letter of 1923 in which Hofmannsthal says, "this last act has something of a castle built over an abyss," along with Burckhardt's remark, "But the poet was not able to believe in this solution."[3] It cannot be concluded from these remarks, however, that Hofmannsthal thought the ending of *Turm 1* artistically or philosophically unsuitable. What the letter actually shows is that he already knew in 1923 that the ending of this particular work could not be a "solution" in the first place, that "belief" or plausibility could have no part in the work's *necessary* ending ("the ending had to be thus" [H/CJB, p. 129]). Burckhardt himself provides further evidence that the idea of a shaky edifice on the brink of the abyss, not the idea of a problem with a solution, had been part of the conception of *Der Turm* at least since 1920. In that year, according to Burckhardt, Hofmannsthal had remarked with reference to Goethe's *Egmont*, "the saving power lies beyond human life, always in the realm of vital forces that sustain the world over the abyss of nothingness";[4] and both men recall that in that conver-

sation Hofmannsthal had been thinking mainly about *Der Turm*. The question of a "solution" to the world's problems, in the form, say, of an "intellectual world-shaping," never arises. What is shown in *Der Turm* is a world precariously balanced "over the abyss of nothingness"; the vision of the boy-king belongs neither to the plot nor to an abstract or concrete commentary on real cultural dynamics, but to the system of forces that maintains that balance.

2

In order to understand the boy-king, in the ironic complexity of his relation to the audience, it is necessary first to understand the function of the ghost scene where the gypsy poisons Sigismund. Rey's perception of this scene's "peculiar twilight," in which Olivier's defeat is simply presupposed, is entirely accurate: "Here it emerges that Sigismund has not completed the exit from the dream-world of the tower into the world of realities, that even in his general's tent he believes still in the magic power of the spirit" (p. 167). The trouble is that Rey considers these features of the text to be "traces of an inner uncertainty" in Hofmannsthal. Again, there is no reason to assume that the ambiguity and confusion, the "twilight," the chaotic tendency, do not belong to the scene as regulated elements of its conception.

Good sense can be made of the ghost scene by arguing that its function is to reveal that spirit or intellect, in its attempt via Sigismund to impose a valid order on the real world, is defeated *by its own power*, not by any external force. The ghost scene represents the triumph of visionary intellect over reality, a triumph so complete as to break down the very structure of space and time. For Sigismund, as earlier for Lord Chandos, the illusion of reality collapses, the veil of *maya* is torn apart to reveal an absolute unity of Being in which space and time, life and death, all such oppositions and distinctions, are superseded by pure "immediacy" (P2 15); Julian's "new language that says the Upper and the Lower together" is not different from Chandos' "language in which mute things speak to me" – and it is interesting that Chandos, like Julian, is also a kind of ghost, in that he makes (in his letter) the gestures belonging to a type of life he no longer really lives. From the ghost scene onwards, the stage in *Turm 1* has been transformed and now imitates not reality but vision, as is also indicated by the circumstance that it is "the standing gypsy," the gypsy's spectral double, who remains when the scene is over, not "the squatting gypsy" who

is the real or at least the original one.[5] The "twilight" Rey speaks of thus overflows the ghost scene and lasts to the end of the play; the stage is peopled not by real persons in a real situation, but by creatures of intellectual vision, the last of whom, and the most perfectly unreal, is the boy-king.

And yet, this victory of vision over reality – which is Sigismund's own victory ("Bei meiner Überkraft! So wahr ich dich hergezogen an dem tiefsten Strang den ich in der Hand habe!" [D4 183]) and provides him with exactly the strategic information he has sought concerning Olivier – is also the moment at which he receives his death-wound, just as Electra's victory is the occasion of her death, and just as for Chandos the achievement of immediate visionary experience of the utter unity of being also kills him intellectually, by denying him the vehicle of artistic form. The truth behind this pattern is that intellect always tends toward its own destruction, that the absolute victory of intellectual knowledge is necessarily realized as a catastrophe for the knower. This is the myth of Oedipus: first at Delphi, and then in dealing with the plague at Thebes, Oedipus insists on knowing the whole truth about himself, and the truth, when he learns it, ruins him. Or in terms of the argument of the last chapter, which develops the potential for tragic joy in this situation, the exercise of critical or speculative intellect already *is* a commitment to human finitude, to mortality, to this dangerous world that must swallow us up in the end.

We shall not get far by attempting to understand Sigismund's death as a matter of real cause and effect, or of moral justice, as Rey apparently does when he speaks of "guilt" (p. 167); for the poisoning occurs as part of an action in which every such orderly system of explanation disintegrates. What is manifested in the ghost scene is the true (if unwitting) aim of intellectual striving, a dissolution of all appearance, all form, to reveal the absolute unity of truth. And truth in this sense has two distinct aspects: a demonic or chaotic aspect (the confusions of the ghost scene) which, since all form is transcended, involves the destruction of the knower as an individual; but also a sublime aspect (the boy-king) corresponding to what Nietzsche calls "the metaphysical consolation" of tragedy,[6] an intimation of eternal Being itself. Such knowledge is thus at once both an intellectual victory and an intellectual defeat; it is the succumbing of intellect to its own power, not to any external agency. Sigismund accomplishes on a visionary plane what Julian had accomplished in the real world, literally *Acheronta movere*

(see D4 42, 133; *Aeneid*, VII, 312); he stirs up the lower depths (ghost scene) while at the same time also bringing forth a vision of surpassing sublimity in the boy-king, just as Julian is the creator not only of the chthonic mob, that "Nothing with a thousand heads" (D4 157), but also of the sublime king Sigismund: "Are you there too, my creature?" (D4 158). The emphasis, in the parallel between Sigismund and Julian, on the idea that chaos and sublimity are both necessary aspects of a single basic intellectual act, is also evidently an interpretation of the dialectical relation between Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian;[7] and it is the consciousness of this parallel, of his own supersedure now by a sublime vision he himself has in a sense brought forth (the boy-king), that prompts Sigismund's last words in *Turm 1*, "Here I am, Julian!"

This combination of defeat and victory, finally, this distinguishing of a sublime and an infernal aspect of intellectual vision, an Apollonianly glorified Dionysus and a primitive Dionysian wallowing in chaos, follows as a corollary of the philosophical argument suggested in the last chapter. Intellect, considered as either self-consciousness or philosophical speculation, is inevitably a disordering force in existence. The ego, the identity of myself with "my ego of yesterday," the integrity of the individual, upon which all economic, social and moral order is founded, is rendered problematic by the self-detachment of consciousness; the validity of all forms, even the forms of our physical existence, collapses before the truth of human divinity, the understanding that form as such is contingent, is ever generated anew by the articulative act that is manifest in human being, that nature without our own presence in it (our "uns") is a "chaos of dead things." But these absurd or contradictory consequences of intellect, to the extent that we do not avoid them but embrace them, also represent a commitment of ourselves to finitude, suffering, confusion, a Christ-like sacrifice that validates after all, by our being included in it as its victims, the sublime universal order generated by the god in us. Julian's supposedly "new" language, "that says the Upper and the Lower together," is in truth already contained in the normal operation of intellect, as Sigismund insists when he responds that that language "already approaches me on its eight feet" (D4 186) – whereby he manages, I think, to suggest both the spider of poetry (W1 86; G 89) and the two horses of the parable in the *Phaedrus* (246A–B, 253C ff.).

3

Let us review the basic line of thought, in Hofmannsthal, by which the negative or chaotic or infernal aspect of intellect is developed. The proper ultimate object of intellect is an indivisible truth behind all distinguishable forms; and the exercise of intellect, as a certain gentleman in disguise made clear to our grandparents in the Garden, therefore raises us up to the level of God. "The truth that is there behind all appearance dwells with God" (D4 71), says Brother Ignatius, who is no friend of intellect; but even he is willing to admit that humans can participate in divine knowledge:

> But I say to you: there is an eye before which today is like yesterday and tomorrow like today. Therefore the future can be fathomed and the sibyl stands beside Solomon and the astrologer beside the prophet. (D4 72)

Or we hear Sigismund himself, immediately before the ghost scene, saying that in essence there is no such thing as time, that "nothing is there or not there: everything, in being, was already there" (D4 174).

A human being, however, is not only the vessel of infinite intellect, but also a physical thing, strictly confined in space and time. "Here within," says Sigismund, crossing his arms over his breast, "are the four ends of the world; faster than the eagle I fly from one to the other, and yet I am of one piece and solid as ebony: that is the secret" (D4 98). That man is both an infinite intellect and a finite thing, this paradox which Schopenhauer calls "the miracle κατ' ἐξοχήν,"[8] had led for Hofmannsthal to the logical consequence that mankind must set a limit to the operation of his intellect. It is possible to know intellectually even up to the level of prophetic vision (sibyl, astrologer), but there is a point beyond which it is no longer possible to make use of intellectual knowledge in the real world. If an individual, like Sigismund in the ghost scene, possesses knowledge that transcends space and time, then in order to make use of this knowledge in reality, he must exist *inside* the world ("Ich bin ein General in seinem Zelt" [D4 187]) while at the same time also placing himself *outside* as a kind of god ("und ich lebe unter den Sternen auch am lichten Tage" [D4 174]), and so embodies a contradiction. He seeks to realize as form a true knowledge of Being that transcends all form, and at precisely the moment of success he therefore also fails. Similarly, for Nietzsche, the union of Apollonian and Dionysian can occur only in dramatic tragedy, where the hero, who embodies this union as a flash of pure truth,

inevitably suffers a corresponding ruin. Truth, when realized as form, explodes the form in which it is realized.[9]

In a sense it is true that we always make the hopeless attempt to exist both inside and outside reality, in being conscious of ourselves, at once both observer and object; and it follows that our very existence is a kind of crime against natural order, this being probably one of the points that attracted Hofmannsthal to the "Life Is a Dream" material in the first place – "pues el delito mayor / del hombre es haber nacido."[10] But the further conclusion he had drawn earlier is that mankind must set a limit to the operation of intellect. Once an individual has penetrated intellectually beyond external appearances, then, like Brother Ignatius or like the Beggar in the *Großes Welttheater*, he must retire from the world and renounce the use of his knowledge; for the attempt to employ infinite knowledge in the finite world necessarily results in what the angel calls "Untat."

This conclusion is retracted in *Der Turm.*[11] Sigismund simply insists on truth and involves himself unhesitatingly in the self-conflicting relation of insideness and outsideness, in the impossible combination of "ordering and stepping out of the old order" (D4 197), which in the ghost scene appears as a paradoxical mixture of "reality and vision, strategy and magic" (Rey, p. 167) and which is also contained in the desperate attempt of the Eldest Banneret to reconcile the idea of actual social chaos with that of a traditionally sanctioned order (D4 195–6). Moreover, Sigismund's whole fate, from childhood on, is the result of an attempt to employ transcendent knowledge (from the prophecy at his birth) in the real world (by imprisoning him). The ghost scene is thus not only a phase in the play's development but also a scale model of the whole, a concentrated image of the truth that infinite intellect, precisely to the extent that it succeeds in imposing itself on the finite world, inevitably generates not order but chaos.

In a note from 1921 we read, "the individual and the age seen as myth, thus: what lives in the age since Kant as a changed feeling for world is somehow mirrored in Sigismund" (A 233).[12] If we assume, given the idea of myth, that Hofmannsthal is thinking of Nietzsche's view of Kant, then the meaning is not difficult. Nietzsche recalls,

> how it was possible for the spirit of *German philosophy*, in Kant and Schopenhauer, to destroy the complacent pleasure at existence of scientific Socratism by demonstrating its limits, and how this demonstration initiated an infinitely deeper and more serious consideration of ethical questions

and of art, a movement that we might even call *Dionysian wisdom* formulated in concepts.[13]

That is, the "age since Kant" is characterized by a collapse of the idea "that Thinking has not only to know Being, but is able even to *correct* it."[14] The attempt to employ intellectual knowledge in the real world (das Sein *corrigiren*) is now recognized as futile, but also, in its futility, as "wisdom," as the source of a new tragic myth, a vision of mankind, of Sigismund, as no longer happily detached from his knowable "world," but himself the originator, and also inevitably the victim, of all true order.

4

The irony at the end of the play, the shift from a real to a purely visionary plane, is therefore unavoidable, because the knowledge expressed in Sigismund's fall, that intellect, by succeeding in the world, brings about its own failure, is itself a piece of transcendent intellectual knowledge and cannot be adequately manifested in reality. The retention of a realistic atmosphere would have presented Sigismund's death as the outcome of a struggle between intellect and reality, whereas the point is that intellect is defeated not by reality but by its own nature, by what Nietzsche calls its "instinctive" tendency to become tragic vision.[15] In a sense, the visionary transformation of the stage can be felt as a kind of victory for vision over reality, which is then sealed by the appearance of the boy-king; but the hasty arbitrariness of that transformation keeps it from being taken only in this sense, reminds us that the victory of vision is also a defeat and leaves untouched the real cultural problems suggested by the play. And this combination of victory and defeat again reflects the central truth that for intellect success and failure are the same thing, that by successfully imposing itself upon the real world, intellect also brings about an eruption of chaos that overwhelms its finite realization. Even the title of the play, if we agree that the Tower of Babel is part of its meaning,[16] reflects the internal paradox in heavenward intellect, for the citizens of Babel build in order to avoid being "scattered abroad" (Genesis 11:4), and then suffer this fate because they have built.

But again, the paradox works both ways. If the ghost scene reveals intellectual success as a failure, the arrival of the Kinderkönig reveals intellectual failure as a kind of success. Sigismund's work is carried on; intellect, though eternally thwarted, is never actually destroyed, for the tragic pattern in which it manifests itself

is the basic order of existence. The *Großes Welttheater* suggests that at least one reasonable response to the problems of intellect is simply to leave the world alone, to imitate God by practicing "an enormous letting-be." But in *Turm I* the place of the Beggar is taken by Brother Ignatius, who lives in his coffin and whose "letting-be," his unconcern for the sufferings of the realm, is seen negatively as a kind of living death. In *Turm I* the hero is no longer the Beggar, who learns to retire from the world, but an upstart king who strives to remake the world in the image of intellect. Since by nature, as Sigismund recognizes, we are after all an incomprehensible intermediate essence between intellect and reality, or between Being and Existence, it follows that we *must* attempt to employ intellect in the real world, even in knowing that the attempt is futile. We have no choice: how can we be human in the first place, except in the attempt to reconcile and realize as a totality the internal opposition in human nature? "I ask you – as you are men – whether there is not something in you that says yes to me despite everything" (D4 201). And of course Nietzsche does not advocate retiring from the world either: "It is the magic of these battles that whoever sees them must also fight them!"[17]

Thus the philosophical structure of *Turm I* is completed. And Hofmannsthal's "return" by way of the homecomer and *Der Schwierige* is completed as well. Chandos is at last fully reincorporated into artistic form, for it is now revealed that there is no such thing as non-intellectual existence. On one hand, the exercise of intellect is always in truth a commitment of ourselves to temporal or finite existence. But on the other hand, for a human being, *there is no other form of commitment to finitude*; all human confusion and suffering, whether or not it appears so, *is* the assertion of self-conscious, speculative intellect, the attempt to remake reality as a work of art. The place of the world-theater's Beggar, who is reconciled to finite reality by renouncing the ambition of intellect, is now taken by the imperious, self-lacerating contempt of Brother Ignatius, whose ego insists on itself in the very destruction of ego (D4 67), who is himself an "actor" in his very attack on the king for being such (D4 73). He says to the king, "a human being begins where a bestially lusting body is overpowered and trodden upon by essentialness [Wesenheit]. That was never your affair" (D4 70); but it is he himself who also explains in great detail that God does not punish us *for* our bodily attachment, rather that God's presence *in* us punishes us *with* that attachment (D4 75). Suffering, finitude, mortality, time, our very physical existence, in truth all belong to

divine intellect, are our own intellectual act of commitment – interpreted by Brother Ignatius, for both himself and the king, as punishment – whether acknowledged or no. Therefore it is not inconsistent that Sigismund says, "Der Mensch ist eine einzige Herrlichkeit, und er hat nicht zuviel Leiden und Schmerzen, sondern ihrer zu wenig" (D4 99),[18] "Man is a unique glory, and he has not too many sufferings and pains, but too few." For this statement, like all of Sigismund's utterances, is an assertion and affirmation of the intellect, of the essentially intellectual nature of all our experience of time and finitude.

The paradox of divine intellect, the identity of victory and defeat, can thus be developed a step further. For intellect, it now follows, is always wholly manifest in reality; reality, our finite or physical existence, is always itself the victorious self-assertion of the god in us. But precisely because of our finite existence as individuals, we cannot *experience* intellect except as rebellion, the creative urge, the need to remake reality; and correspondingly, we cannot experience reality except as danger or suffering, as an assault upon "uns," upon our sense of divine or creative self. Thus, in our condition as individuals, intellect is always defeated, either *by* reality (Sigismund's defeat in Act III) or else in its conquest *of* reality (the chaotic ghost scene of Act V). And yet, this defeat is always itself a triumphant manifestation of intellect, a Nietzschean "self-conquest" in the highest sense, for as the doctor says, "Nemo contra Deum, nisi Deus ipse" (D4 49).[19] In truth, "life is a dream"; reality is merely that function of intellect by which the tragic self-contradictoriness of intellect is fulfilled. But intellect or human divinity, as the self-contradiction it is, as a tragic whole, can never become manifest *in* our finite "dream" without appearing falsely as a conflict between intellect and reality.

Let us turn again to the situation in the theater. For in the theater, despite everything, it appears that the whole tragic self-contradictoriness of intellect *is* made manifest to us. The question of whether the play is believable or convincing as an illusion is irrelevant. The point is that in the theater we find ourselves participating in the creation and elucidation of a symbol that does unquestionably shadow forth the truth; we do not merely think in solitude about the truth – we do not confuse ourselves in the eddies of half-achieved and already half-forgotten formulation that are our solitary thought – but rather we put the truth there in the form of a symbol among us, our understanding of it constantly rescued and reaffirmed by the presumed understanding of others.[20] Sigis-

mund, we insist – "we," the gathered audience – simply is our quintessence, divine humanity and pure human individuality, who receives his death-wound in the very moment of his intellectual conquest of the real. Or more exactly, *Der Turm* interprets the theater, the whole tradition of theater from Dionysian ritual onward, as our inveterate insistence on the symbolic manifestness of truth, our irresistible thirst, like Sigismund's, for knowing and viewing the whole tragic shape of our intellectually founded existence. The theater, that is, reveals to us, *in* the reality of our individuated existence, what "reality" cannot reveal to the individual; the theater is interpreted by *Der Turm* as an intellectual triumph, a visionary remaking of reality, comparable to Sigismund's victory in the ghost scene, a triumph that therefore inevitably involves *us*, the audience, in the tragic identity of victory and defeat that we recognize in Sigismund's fate. "Sudden they become like what they behold," prophesies Blake;[21] by merely watching the hopeless struggle of intellect with its own nature, we also, as Nietzsche suggests, take part in the struggle, and inevitably suffer, or must expect to suffer, the defeat that belongs to our victory.

For the time being, however, there is nothing but victory, and the appearance of the boy-king is the seal upon *our* intellectual victory over a recalcitrant finite existence. The transformation of the stage into pure vision, which culminates in the figure of the boy-king, is to us what the revelations of the ghost scene are to Sigismund. (It is significant that the two forms of the gypsy, crouching and standing, are repeated in the two forms of the boy-king: his mysterious but faintly ridiculous "Green Majesty" [D4 178], who belongs to the larger political–military plot of the work; but also the vision of an ultimate prince who composes all conflict in his teaching of peace.) And the irony of that ending, the abruptness of that transformation, the sudden gulf that separates the concluding vision from the submerged but strongly cohesive plot of the rest, is the only clear indication that our victory is as inherently self-undermining as Sigismund's. Indeed, such irony is the only possible indication of our compromised position. The play cannot return to reality, not even to the fictional reality of its plot, because in the ghost scene it has revealed itself as not belonging to reality in the first place. The play, the theater, our achievement as we sit there, is nothing but intellectual or visionary conquest, the achievement of symbolic knowledge. Reality, fictional or otherwise, no longer concerns us, any more than it does Sigismund; for us too, as

knowers of a knowledge that cannot be known *in* reality, there is "no room in time" (D4 207). Only our knowledge, and our situation as knowers, concerns us. The motif of the apparently harmless but poisoned weapon by which Sigismund is killed recalls *Hamlet* (as do any number of other motifs in *Der Turm*) and so also the association of poison with knowledge – introduced through the ear like words, or as the pearl in the wine drunk by Gertrude. But this association implies that when the stage reveals itself as the vision it truly is, when for us too the normal boundaries of reality are dissolved, it is not only Sigismund who is receiving his death. Yet again, in *Der Turm*, *Der Tor und der Tod* is rewritten; now the profoundest ritual aspect of the earlier play is revived, the actual presence of death for the audience.

To the extent that we accept and engage the concluding suggestion of irony, therefore, our experience of the play is not only an intellectual self-assertion, but also an affirmation of suffering, the affirmation of a suffering that is not resolved into images but has the imageless quality of death itself, the void; "this last act has something of a castle built over the abyss." The exit of the boy-king from the stage mirrors our own exit from the theater; and we too, in leaving, bear Sigismund along as a talisman. "Bear witness: I was there" (D4 207). But it is the *whole* Sigismund we take with us from the theater, both the upper and the lower knowledge, the knowledge he articulates and the other knowledge that rises up inexorably about that symbolic center. Our death has been present to us, in the theater, and our time, like Sigismund's after the ghost scene, our conscious detachment, our irony, our fuller knowledge, is but a postponement of death, as it were a postponement of our speaking the words, "Here I am, Sigismund!" – a postponement, we might say, *of* the analogy *by* the analogy. The end of *Turm 1* is not optimistic in any sense whatever; the appearance of the boy-king, to carry on for Sigismund, is simply a reflection of our own inescapable carrying-on, a carrying-on that is itself in truth *made* of nothing but such reflection. There is a certain cathartic joy in the proper understanding of the play, a comprehension and assertion, joyful in its simplicity, of the divine in us. But this joy is not optimistic; it does not exist except as knowledge of the full truth, the perfect hopelessness and hopeless perfection of our being: "Mir ist viel zu wohl zum Hoffen" (D4 202).

5

Why, then, did Hofmannsthal write *Turm 2*? Rey says, "It might seem odd that *Turm 2* was published in 1927, the same year Hofmannsthal presented his vision of a conservative revolution" (p. 168).[22] But the oddity of this coincidence vanishes when we recognize that *Turm 2*, like the Munich speech, is also a piece of conservative intellectual propaganda. There are letters in which Hofmannsthal expresses the conviction that his changes in *Turm 2* will not violate the play's artistic integrity;[23] but these letters would assume value as evidence only in support of a critical argument based on the text, and it does not seem to me that such an argument can be given. In fact, in the most emphatic of those epistolary utterances, to Burckhardt, Hofmannsthal seems thoroughly confused:

> Do you remember that July evening six years ago, when we read the last acts of *Egmont* together? I had a feeling then of how *Der Turm* had to end, then I lost it, overwhelmed as I was by the material and its apparent [!] possibilities – but now I *know* it again.[24]

Can this refer to the ending of *Turm 2*, which certainly has less in common than that of *Turm 1* with the leap into vision at the end of *Egmont*? Only three days after his last artistically confident letter to Andrian, Hofmannsthal writes another letter to Burckhardt in which he reveals what is now really on his mind, the letter in which he speaks of "humanism" and its inexorable decline, of "the terrible rigors in this turning of events," and of his decision to live nevertheless in the present ("mitzuleben"), rather than "lose the rest of my life in unfruitful bitterness" (H/CJB, p. 227). It is this decision that is reflected in the writing of *Turm 2*, Hofmannsthal's decision to sacrifice his precarious philosophical achievement in favor of cultural and political engagement, a decision to live in the present age and work on it directly. Especially with Reinhardt encouraging him,[25] he also attempts to convince himself that *Turm 2* is an artistic improvement upon *Turm 1*; but more to the point is Coghlan's remark that, "Viewed at a distance in time the two versions are seen to be serving different ends."[26] *Turm 1* is a tragedy with a deeply ironic ending; *Turm 2* is propaganda.

Or as Rey correctly perceives, Sigismund, in *Turm 2*, "does not step out of his tower of inwardness" (p. 169); what *Turm 2* presents, that is, is what Hofmannsthal had at all costs avoided presenting in *Turm 1*, the mere *struggle* between intellect and reality. "What is now standing before you is reality" (D4 455), says

Olivier in *Turm 2*. The play is no longer a tragedy, based on the truth that intellect is defeated by its own power, but an indictment of the particular external reality represented by Olivier, whose rôle is now much more fully developed. Sigismund has become pitiable, and the play ends with a vision of political chaos that must be stemmed by some sort of positive action. Nor is this argument inconsistent with the idea expressed long ago by Naef, and best recently by R. T. Llewellyn, that *Turm 2* is a martyr-play with a real sense of hope at the end.[27] My point is that the second version is *more* hopeful (though less joyful) than the first, since the peril to be met (Olivier) is fully externalized and accessible.

But how could Hofmannsthal bring himself to violate the tragic structure of his own work so soon after completing it? The answer to this question is both clear and typical. In *Turm 1* we learn that we have no choice but to make use of the intellect, to impose an intellectual form upon reality, however impossible the achievement of this end; and in *Turm 2* Hofmannsthal simply applies this lesson to himself, even though it means sacrificing his drama. From the point of view of the author, provided the pressure of external events ("terrible rigors") is sufficient to make him think in these terms, *Turm 1* contains an inconsistency. It advocates firm intellectual commitment despite everything, but it does so in part by means of irony, which can be interpreted as a self-detachment, an avoidance of commitment, on the part of the author. This is the situation Hofmannsthal attempts to remedy in *Turm 2*. When Rey speaks of Hofmannsthal's "heroic attempt at intellectual world-penetration" (p. 163), he means *Turm 1*, but he ought to mean *Turm 2*; for in the latter Hofmannsthal incorporates into himself the earlier character of Sigismund. It is now the author, not the character, who steps forth as "a general" and now strives to assert intellectual order directly, through propaganda, in the real political Europe of his time, not in the realm of mere art.[28] Poets lie too much, says Zarathustra; but Hofmannsthal here manifests a desperate and disastrous sincerity, which measures the depth of his sense of obligation, as a teacher, to his age. The irony at the end of *Turm 1* implies, as a corollary, that intellectual engagement in a conservative sense is at once absolutely necessary and absolutely futile; and this recognition is the source of the tendency toward imbalance and impracticality that Hermann Rudolph observes in Hofmannsthal's late cultural–political thinking.[29] Rudolph, however, does not locate the *artistically* self-critical nature of the development he treats. In reality it is Hofmannsthal's struggle with

the meaning and implications of his own self-summarizing tragedy that sets the tone in his late expository writing. I drew the conclusion, says Zarathustra, and now the conclusion draws me.

Turm 2 is negative propaganda; it shows primarily what must be striven *against.* Sigismund's speeches in Act v of *Turm 2*, which are taken largely from Act IV of *Turm 1*, now all sound hollow and vague and contextless, despite Grete Schaeder's attempt to turn this fact onto its head.[30] All the important new material is spoken by Olivier, and the last act of *Turm 2* is Olivier's alone; it exists for the sole purpose of giving him room to express his grotesquely sophistical, indiscussible, and therefore perversely irrefutable ideas on politics and fatality.[31] Schaeder herself observes that "Julian, in the second version, has moved strongly into the background,"[32] which means that yet another integral element of the original tragedy has been removed; for the repetition of Julian's fate on a higher level in Sigismund's, the parallel between them, is needed to establish the universality of the tragic paradox. This system of parallels in *Turm 1* includes even Olivier who, like Sigismund, is also a "creature" of Julian and, like Sigismund, outgrows his creator. Just as both Julian and Sigismund, and for that matter Basilius as well, are defeated by the variously imagined "depths" they have stirred up, so also Olivier is thwarted by the "depths," by the poorest of the poor among his own followers who save Sigismund. "I am as you are" (D4 154), says Sigismund to Olivier in *Turm 1*; and the essence of the tragedy is that this statement is true, that there is but one human fate in the play, reflected on various levels. But in *Turm 2* Sigismund lives in a *separate* world (in his "tower of inwardness"), and the structural integrity of the work is lost.

Turm 2 is perhaps not "propaganda" in the usual sense of the word; that which "is to be propagated" is never made clear, as it is not made clear, for that matter, in the "Schrifttum" speech either. We shall understand why this is so if we borrow from Rudolph the notion of "Daseinsführung"; that which is to be propagated cannot be prescribed, because it has to do with our personal existence as individuals on too deep a level. *Turm 2* manifests the decision to write a kind of propaganda where propaganda is impossible, and it may not be exaggerated to characterize this decision as "heroic" or "tragic," so long as we keep in mind that we are applying these ideas to the author, not the work. Part of Hofmannsthal's *personal* tragedy is that dramatic tragedy had to be sacrificed. "Propaganda" may be too strong a word, but at least *Turm 2* is a better piece of

propaganda than the Munich speech, insofar as the figure of Olivier makes clearer what the "conservative revolution" is to revolt against. And it is also a more revealing biographical document than any of Hofmannsthal's letters, since, by comparison with *Turm 1*, we can see here more clearly than anywhere else that coupling of a self-referred artistic dynamics with certain powerful external concerns which produces the development that we have now followed to its problematic end.

CONCLUSION

HOFMANNSTHAL'S DEVELOPMENT

"Simple" and "easy" are different concepts. The simplicity of the 1925 version of *Der Turm* has much in common with the straightforward philosophical exuberance of Hofmannsthal's earliest writings and jottings; it is the closing of a huge circle, the outcry, "Here I am, Goethe!" But the significance of this closing is measured by the size of the circle, the unending complexities of Hofmannsthal's struggle to come to grips with an actual cultural situation which, difficult enough to begin with, was made more so by the earnest self-critical intensity with which he approached it. I have not raised, and I will not raise, the question of whether a work like *Der Turm* is valuable or even interesting "in itself." We do not have that work, or any work, in itself. We have it only against the background of what we know about its author and the conditions of its production, and we cannot unravel this knowledge from the fabric of our perception.

Hofmannsthal's development, then, is in one sense a closed circle. But in another sense it is an accumulation, a progression outward by way of the ideas of the poetic, the social, and the cultural. And at each stage in this progression, Hofmannsthal does his best to incorporate the thought of the earlier stages. His conception of the social focusses upon an idea of "symbol" that is entirely consistent with his youthful theory of poetic language, with the idea that poetry brings to the fore the quality of language as action that supplements and stabilizes the inevitable irony or indirection or paradox in a system of philosophical signs. But this notion of the social, and the accompanying theory of the allomatic, still tend toward the abstract, despite a commitment to contingent art, or "art by accident," that attempts to anchor them in external reality. And it is by way of the idea of culture, especially European culture as represented in Salzburg, that Hofmannsthal now makes his final move outward.

The idea of culture, however, as an idea, is still a development of

the idea of society that it supersedes. Like society in *Der Schwierige*, the larger entity of culture has a metaphysically symbolic function, by being at once both our life-supporting element and our free artistic creation (the image of the spider and the web still reverberates), and enables us to preserve by enacting a truth that is inevitably lost in abstract systems. Therefore Hofmannsthal enjoins our active participation in the cultural, insists that only by way of "an active power" in us, by which the cultural is affirmed and repeatedly created anew, does our culture achieve its nature as a symbol, whereas "the unbridled penchant for abstraction and a conceptually overrefined language" always present us with a detached object of knowledge, not really a culture, not our element at all. But how are we supposed to think of culture in the first place, if abstract concepts falsify it? For the purposes of the *Neue deutsche Beiträge*, Hofmannsthal suggests, "Let us at all costs keep hold of the figure [Gestalt] . . . The figure disposes of the problem, answers the unanswerable" (P4 144). We must think not in abstractions, but in figures or configurations; for the figure, while it has that stability without which a culture as "moralization, shaped unity" (P4 148) cannot exist, does not have the finality of an abstract concept. The figure is interpretable and developable, a scheme in relation to which our own activity is not only possible but necessary, that it be realized. In *Der Turm*, for example, not only does the figure of Sigismund dispose of the abstract Sacramozo-problem, but it also involves the audience in the process of disposing and so replaces an abstraction by an experience. The organism of analogies called into life by the play is such that we understand Sigismund only by understanding our own situation in the theater, and understanding it with a philosophical generality that has consequences throughout our communal existence. If the nature of society, in Hofmannsthal's view, is fulfilled in the experience of the accidentalness of the ego, then culture is a kind of huge art form in which, by way of "figures," images, myths, like Sigismund, the ego is restored to us as a thoroughly communal entity. "At base we are all collective beings, whatever we pretend," says, in his exemplary self-collection, old Goethe to Eckermann on February 17, 1832, a month before his death.

Thus, despite the sense of accomplishing a return to youthful ideas, and despite the repudiation of certain elements of the *Großes Welttheater, Der Turm* is also part of Hofmannsthal's late cultural project, perhaps the culmination of it. If this were not the case, it would be difficult to understand his sensitivity to the opinions on

Der Turm of his friends and associates, his desire that the play make an actual mark on the life of its time. "I ask you – as you are men – if there is not something in you that says yes to me despite everything." And if the text thus articulates its author's own plea to his contemporaries, it also anticipates, with a forced equanimity, the response to that plea. "Bear witness: I was there. Even if no one knew me" (D4 207). For as far as Hofmannsthal could tell, no one did understand *Der Turm*, least of all Reinhardt, whom, as I have said, I blame for suggesting the disastrous revisions, and who – if the reader will indulge my unwillingness to accept fate, and my garbling of chronology – was an exceedingly empty spirit, a bag of big cheap tricks tied together with shreds of Copeau and patches of Piscator, but utterly unburdened with either the former's imagination or the latter's strength of conviction.

To be fair, the *Turm* crisis was largely of Hofmannsthal's own making, for the play is an excursion into the impossible. In October 1922, in the midst of his struggles with the first version (see H/CJB, pp. 98–9), he pays tribute to an old associate: "George almost alone, with the circle of people he leads, has powerfully opposed the general abasement and confusion of things" (P4 148). What he praises George for is what he himself is attempting to do, to resist the base and confusing tendencies of the time; but unlike George, he makes this attempt in the course of an earnest effort to reach out for contact with the time. He puts himself in the impossible position of saying what he knows the time is not equipped to hear (at least not in the full philosophical sense he intends), but insisting on being heard anyway. And his consciousness of desperation is shown in his willingness, then, to carry out the wildly conflicting revisions that result in *Turm 2*, to substitute a muddled and muddling propaganda for a clear dramatic architecture, to chastise both himself and his hero for an earlier prophetic pretentiousness, while at the same time, by borrowing and modifying (of all things) the ending of Hauptmann's *Die Weber*, he advances the defensive or indeed paranoid suggestion of a diabolical plot behind the apparently accidental forces of disorder in modern society.

This desperation, this practically fanatical determination to make good on the paradoxical quality of his poetry by forcing absolute opposites together in reality as well, by being at once both a Goethe, a kind of self-made, self-closed and self-contemplating cultural icon, and also a "general in his tent," a tightener of cultural nuts and bolts, a worker and fighter in the immediate present, this nerve-racking balancing act leads inevitably to the collapse I have

spoken of at the end of Hofmannsthal's career. And a collapse it certainly is, the symptom of a deep and gathering cultural despair. The frequent insensitivity and occasional sheer fatuity of the people and books Hofmannsthal had recourse to, in struggling to maintain his sense of his own mission, is still mastered or transfigured in the visions of Salzburg and of the tower. And even after the collapse of these visions, we still occasionally hear a word or phrase that recalls distantly the spirit of the Sigismund of *Turm 1*, as for example in the foreword to *Wert und Ehre deutscher Sprache*:

> Only this true presence [of the eternal] is the affair of language. The moment is nothing; the true task of language is to make present what has passed away. That which is no more, that which is not yet, that which could be, but above all that which never was, that which is simply impossible and therefore real before all else, to articulate this is the business of language. (P4 438–9)

But such passages lack a fruitful context. After disfiguring *Der Turm*, Hofmannsthal never produced another major poetic work; and when, in the form of expository prose or dialogue, he addresses himself to the question of the actual future of literature or theater, the result is either the conceptual confusion of "Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation" or a sense of uncomfortable temporizing, as in "Das Theater des Neuen."

If we were in a position to choose between the two Hofmannsthals that are offered us toward the end of his life, I think most of us would favor the classical version, the Hofmannsthal of *Turm 1* and *Die ägyptische Helena* – the latter being a kind of amalgam, but without strain, of *Faust* and *The Tempest* – rather than the Hofmannsthal of *Turm 2*, or of *Der Unbestechliche*, which seems to me a thoroughly confused rewriting of *Der Schwierige*. But we are not in a position to choose. We cannot have one Hofmannsthal without the other. The tensions that energize and validate the simplicity of the 1925 version of *Der Turm* are themselves inescapably involved with the developmental factors that then explode *Der Turm*. "Es geht aber alles immer weiter" (D4 186), says dead Julian. Precisely the openness, the willingness to change – "I left each form before it stiffened" (A 241) – that makes possible the travesty of *Turm 2*, is also what had made possible the long and strenuous path leading to *Turm 1*.

This openness, moreover, this mutability, shows in Hofmannsthal not a lack of character but rather, if anything, an excess of character, a rigorous unforgetfulness and self-criticism which

becomes especially clear in his making his peace with Kleist. It is true that not all of his references to Kleist before 1922 are strictly negative; but in the essay "Zur Krisis des Burgtheaters" of 1918, for example, the absence of any mention of Kleist, the exclusion of Kleist from the pantheon of German drama, is conspicuous. There is practically nothing to prepare us for the change when, in the foreword to the *Neue deutsche Beiträge* – and precisely in connection with the idea of "figure" ("Gestalt") as opposed to "Abstraktion" (we recall the earlier disapproval of "the arithmetical" in Kleist) – Hofmannsthal says: "In this matter, aside from the Greeks, the great Italians of the sixteenth century could be teachers to us, and among our own countrymen, above all and inexhaustibly, Goethe, after him Novalis and Kleist" (P4 144). (Goethe himself, interestingly enough, *opposes* Kleistian "hypochondria" to Italian "cheerfulness" [conversation with Falk, 1809].) And in the *Deutsches Lesebuch* of the same year, "Über das Marionettentheater" itself is printed.

The whole question of Kleist is reopened, as if Hofmannsthal could not forgive himself his youthful misjudgment. Indeed, there may be an element of penance or compensation in the echoes of Kleist that now appear in his own work – even alongside the continuing struggle with Kleist, in the figure of Sigismund as a dancing bear! I have already mentioned the similarity between *Der Turm* and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, especially in the unashamedly arbitrary method of characterization; and when we hear Arabella say, "Truth is with me, Mandryka, only truth, for all else – I can see that – is against me" (W26 62; L4 89), we think immediately of both the Marquise von O. and Alkmene, although Hofmannsthal had once seriously objected to the Molière adaptation (A 159). Perhaps the reconciliation with Kleist even includes the germ of a criticism *of* the self-criticism that ruins *Der Turm*. The business of turning his back on the mathematical, on "the arithmetical," on the mere architecture of symbols, in favor of a graceful and vigorous outward participation in "life," has turned out to be nowhere near as easy or as fruitful as Hofmannsthal had once imagined. And before dying, he hurries to acknowledge his error: "Here I am, Kleist!"

"Principles" are what I began by talking about, and principle is perhaps itself the main problem for Hofmannsthal, who repeatedly follows his principles even into the danger of artistic insufficiency. *Die Hochzeit der Sobeide* and *Das Bergwerk zu Falun*, for example, are products of his conviction that the idea of the intellectual poet

in his own earlier works now demands a tragic form for which he is not yet really prepared; *Jedermann* is the attempt to fulfil the duties of a cultural citizenship that he feels he has neglected; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, as a developed version of *Der Kaiser und die Hexe*, expresses an unnecessary pang of conscience, Hofmannsthal's feeling that with the musical dramas he has again entrapped himself in a lyrically absolute, as it were philosophically imperial artistic attitude, and must now break through once more into the clarity of severe mundane limitations; and *Turm 2* is a disastrously logical application of ethical principles derived from *Turm 1*. Thus, in Hofmannsthal's career as a whole, we find a paradox of the same type that haunts the philosophical aspect of his work, an excess of openness, mutability, receptivity, that is the product of an adherence to principle, of the unceasing attempt to operate with strict unity and consistency.

But in the course of his indirections, detours, recantations, misjudgments and confusions, Hofmannsthal still created no fewer than seven different theaters, each with its own unique character and excellence: the lyrical–metaphysical theater of *Der Tor und der Tod*, with a tendency toward self-critical irony in plays like *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* and *Das Kleine Welttheater*; the mimetic–ethical theater of *Theater in Versen*; the theater of naked truth in the early tragedies, which keeps its balance by an especially direct allusion to earlier texts in dramatic tradition; the musical theater, including its later revival in *Die ägyptische Helena* and *Arabella*; the comic theater as itself a symbol within a symbolically conceived society, fully realized only in *Der Schwierige*; the festival theater or *Großes Welttheater* of a new European culture, with more or less conscious forerunners in *Jedermann* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; and finally, the new tragic theater of mythically revealed truth in *Der Turm*. The differences among these theaters reflect the recurrent uncertainty and endangeredness of Hofmannsthal's development. But what counts ultimately, I think, is the thoroughness with which the possibilities of each theater are worked out, and the presence in each work, despite their differences, of a single basic artistic and philosophical project, a single vision, as it were, of *homo dramaticus*, in which the human condition as a whole is intellectually mastered by a knowledge that is not distinct from life itself.

NOTES

Preface

1 Richard Exner, *Hugo von Hofmannsthals "Lebenslied": Eine Studie* (Heidelberg, 1964), p. 39.

2 When, for example, I disagree with Wolfram Mauser, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Konfliktbewältigung und Werkstruktur: Eine psychosoziologische Interpretation* (München, 1977), I do so on my own terms, which does not affect the validity of his arguments on literature as belonging to a psychological or social fabric.

3 *Modern Drama and German Classicism: Renaissance from Lessing to Brecht* (Ithaca, 1979), p. 307. On matters of dramatic theory I will refer several times to this book, and to my article, "Cinema, Theater and Opera: Modern Drama as Ceremony," *MD*, 28 (1985), 1–21.

4 Rudolf Borchardt, "Erinnerungen an Hofmannsthal" (1929), H/RB, p. 219. This and other abbreviations are explained in a list on pp. xvii–xviii.

1. Kleist's puppets

1 On August 20, 1895 Hofmannsthal read Hermann Bahr's essay "Marionetten" which refers to Kleist constantly (see B1 171). Karl Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis und Sprachmagie im Werk des jungen Hofmannsthal* (Zürich, 1958), p. 23, argues that Kleist's puppets figure in the poem "Ein Knabe" (W1 58; G 76); and the Kleistian figure of a boy posing before a mirror also occurs in the study "Age of Innocence" (W29 19; P1 133). Michael Howard Porter, "The Theme of Consciousness in the Poetry and Early Plays of Hugo von Hofmannsthal," Diss. Cornell (1970), p. 8, is reminded of Kleist by the poem "Die Beiden." W, G, etc., are explained in the list of abbreviations on pp. xvii–xviii.

2 If Steiner's arrangement of the fragmentary material is correct, then this note was written shortly *before* Hofmannsthal read Bahr's "Marionetten." Perhaps Kleist's puppets had been a topic of discussion earlier. The apparatus of the *Sämtliche Werke* (W29 288–9) seems to support Steiner's dating, but not conclusively.

3 Heinrich von Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Helmut Sembdner, 2 vols., 5th edn (München, 1970), vol. II, p. 342. Further quotations are located by K plus volume and page number.

4 That Hofmannsthal is thinking specifically of Kleist's essays here is clear from a corresponding note of April 1, 1914 (A 169). And evidence of an association between the idea of "das Rechnerische" and the idea of "Marionetten (scheinhaftes Leben)," is found in an 1895 letter: "Die meisten Menschen leben nicht im Leben, sondern in einem Schein, in einer Art von Algebra [cf. 'das Rechnerische'], wo nichts *ist* und alles nur *bedeutet*" (H/EKvB, p. 81).

5 There is extrinsic evidence to support the idea of a painting here. A note from 1893, which is full of ideas used in the poem, suggests this idea directly: "Der Tod der kleinen Addah ... mit verklärten fiebernden Augen ... 'so müsste man die Heiligen malen' ... Die kleine Addah ... Lebenssaft aus ihr entfliehend" (W1 243; see also W29 26–7). Or we recall the Prologue in *Der Tod des Tizian*, who dreams himself into a painting (W3 39; G 182). And Hofmannsthal writes of d'Annunzio, "aus den Bildern trug er nicht etwa Äußerlichkeiten mit sich, sondern der Seelenzustand, den die Gebärden der gemalten Menschen oder die Farbennuancen der gemalten Lippen, Haare, Blumen und Bäume in sich tragen, schlägt manchmal aus den Schwingungen seiner Verse geheimnisvoll auf" (P1 208).

6 Compare also the mirror episode in Hofmannsthal's "Age of Innocence." For Kleist's young man the result of posing before a mirror is, "und immer ein Reiz nach dem anderen verließ ihn" (K2 344), whereas for Hofmannsthal's little boy the mirror experience precipitates a crisis with the result that "Er hatte einen neuen Reiz des contemplativen Lebens entdeckt" (W29 20; P1 134). By looking into Kleist's mirror we lose "Reiz" ("attractiveness"), whereas by looking into Hofmannsthal's we discover "Reiz" (in the sense of "attraction"). Bahr lays great stress on the mirror anecdote in Kleist; see his "Marionetten," in his *Wiener Theater (1892–1898)* (Berlin, 1899), pp. 443–4.

7 Martin Stern, "Zu einem Gedicht Hugo von Hofmannsthals: 'Ein Traum von großer Magie,'" in *Festschrift Gottfried Weber* (Bad Homburg v. d H., 1967), p. 286, argues an unambiguous "Gegensatz von *Geist* und *Er*." But in Hofmannsthal's notes the remark, "Theophr. Paracelsus über den geheimisvollen Regenten unseres Lebens: 'unser Geist, der nicht in uns wohnet und seinen Stuhl in die oberen Sterne setzt,'" is followed by the words "das wahre Ich, das große Ich" (A 120; see W1 257). Is the "Ich" here not the same as that "Er" who is "Feuer uns im tiefsten Kerne"? In the manuscript of the poem, moreover, the words "Doch er ist Feuer" replace "Doch ist sein Feuer" (W1 254).

8 *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 24, in Nietzsche, *Werke*, ed. Colli and Montinari, III. Abt., 1. Bd. (Berlin, 1972), p. 148. Or we recall the idea of a "Menschwerdung der Dissonanz" (ch. 25), p. 151. The idea of realizing the totality of human being *in experience*, incidentally, is traditionally well established in German literature, in Romantic poetic theory and in Schiller's notion of the "aesthetic state."

9 The first published fragment, in *Pan*, vol. III (Dec. 1897), p. 155, is called "Figuren aus dem Puppenspiel: Das kleine Welttheater."

10 In the same series of notes as the one on "Der reinste state" Hofmannsthal writes, "siehe Kassner über Blake in dem Buch über die englischen Künstler" (A 223). See Rudolf Kassner, "William Blake," in his *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. E. Zinn, 7 vols. (Pfullingen, 1969–84), vol. I, p. 59, where "States" are defined in part as an individual's "Stimmungen." In Gotthart Wunberg, *Der frühe Hofmannsthal: Schizophrenie als dichterische Struktur* (Stuttgart, 1965), the section on "Depersonalisation und Bewußtsein" (pp. 11–40) supports the idea of a schizophrenic *Kleines Welttheater*. And in the 1911 edition of *Die Gedichte und Kleinen Dramen*, Hofmannsthal has this play in the section "Gestalten" (along with *Der Tod des Tizian*, where the action is also dominated by a single *unseen* individual), not in the "Kleine Dramen."

11 Of the toys of Dionysus, the mirror is emphasized by Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, which Hofmannsthal knew (see A 117). On the allusion to Narcissus there is ample manuscript evidence (W3 602).

12 For a summary of the data that make the inclusion of *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* possible but questionable, see W3 678–82.

13 In 1895–6 Hofmannsthal had attended Theodor Gomperz's lectures on Aristotle's *Poetics*, and he now uses Aristotle as a critical tool (see P1 236).

2. Language as poetry

1 References to Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis* (ref. ch. 1, n. 1), whose argument I think is the best of its kind, are located by page number in parentheses. See also Manfred Hoppe, *Literatentum, Magie und Mystik im Frühwerk Hugo von Hofmannsthals* (Berlin, 1968), and Peter Michelsen, "Magie: Hugo von Hofmannsthals 'Der Kaiser und die Hexe,' " in his *Zeit und Bindung: Studien zur deutschen Literatur der Moderne* (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 40–5, who understands magic as the name for a reaction to modern communicative problems.

2 Wolfram Mauser, *Bild und Gebärde in der Sprache Hofmannsthals* (Wien, 1961), esp. pp. 14ff.

3 The whole idea of "conceptual language," as distinct from a vital or immediate or gestural or figural language, is problematic, especially in Hofmannsthal scholarship where the *opposition* between types of language is often insisted on, in Pestalozzi, Hoppe, Mauser, and especially Hartmut Zelinsky, *Brahman und Basilisk: Hugo von Hofmannsthals poetisches System und sein lyrisches Drama "Der Kaiser und die Hexe"* (München, 1974). Zelinsky collects practically all the evidence in Hofmannsthal for such an opposition, and concludes that "das Wort, das Gedicht, das Kunstwerk versteht [Hofmannsthal] nun

nur noch [after 1895] als zu erspürende, zu erfühlende Offenbarung, was ihn veranlaßte, seinen Kampf gegen Begriffe, gegen Schlagworte, gegen das Reden zu kultivieren" (p. 179). But on the same page Hofmannsthal's letter of June 18, 1895 to Edgar Karg is quoted (H/EKvB, p. 82), which speaks of language, music and life as three *coordinated* worlds, "der dreifache Ausdruck eines Unbekannten, einer Schwingung Gottes," all emerging from a single metaphysical origin that they *all* falsify. The "struggle against concepts" is therefore ultimately only a necessary internal tension in language, operating analogously to dissonance in music or to the fruitful internal tension of consciousness in life. It seems to me that the distinction between constative and performative utterance, in J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), represents what most Hofmannsthal scholars are aiming at in trying to distinguish strictly a language of concepts. But the problem remains. Every constative utterance, merely by making the gesture of being such, is performative in carrying out a particular act with respect to its hearer; every performative utterance ("daseinsunmittelbar"?) is effective as such only in relation to an existing state of affairs that at any moment can become the matter of a constative or conceptual utterance. I will continue, however, to *use* the vague notion of conceptual language, it being understood that my aim is not to assert strict opposition with another type of language, but to undermine all such oppositions. The notion, as I use it, is heuristic, and I contend that it is equally heuristic or ironic for Hofmannsthal, who makes the *gesture* of defending language or poetry or art against "Begriffe" throughout his career. See e.g. P1 228, P4 126.

4 The verb "schauen" in fact occurs as a manuscript variant (W1 244).

5 This type of logical situation is analyzed by Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris, 1972), p. 43: "Mais au lieu d'une chose qui se distingue d'autre chose, imaginons quelque chose qui se distingue – et pourtant *ce dont* il se distingue ne se distingue pas de lui." To the examples listed by Deleuze we might add, here, that of self and world: the world necessarily distinguishes itself from the self considered as its divine generating center, but the self does not distinguish itself in the same manner, for distinction or articulation *is* world (rather than self). This analysis, however, does not lay the problem to rest; for there is no way to carry out the analysis without thinking of the world-generating self *as if* it were a distinguishable entity or locus.

6 Among the manuscript variants we find "Schlafsüchtgen" (W1 244). The ambiguity was thus deliberately introduced into the final version.

7 "Terzinen II" is inadvertently interpreted when Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (orig. 1967), trans. Spivak (Baltimore, 1976), p. 292, in developing his remarks on zoography, asserts, "Writing carries death."

8 A total of four poems in this series survive, but only the first three are included in *Die Gedichte und Kleinen Dramen* of 1911, where, as in the collections of 1903, 1904 and 1907, they clearly form a cycle.

9 Compare the note, "Wir erscheinen uns selbst als strahlenbrechende Linsen, den andern als Sammellinsen" (A 92).

10 Compare Augustine on the representation of the Trinity in our conscious life, "Nam et sumus et nos esse novimus et id esse ac nosse diligimus" (*De Civitate Dei*, XI, ch. 26). The parallels, if not blindingly obvious, are at least imaginable as follows: "ein Mensch" ("sumus"), "ein Ding" (object of knowledge, "nos esse novimus"), "ein Traum" (mental and emotional process, "diligimus"). In the next chapter I will refer to this passage from Augustine again, and offer evidence that Hofmannsthal knew it.

11 The "Terzinen" poems were probably composed in the order I, IV, III, II (W1 226–42). But the order of composition does not affect my argument. The poems were all written within a short time of each other, and were probably conceived as a cycle.

3. The smallest world theater

1 See Maurice Blanchot, *La Part du feu* (Paris, 1949), pp. 327–9; also Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Hertz (New York, 1971), pp. 123–4, 134–5, on "listening" or "silence" in even our speaking relation to language. On poetry as the revelation of a primordial speaking, see M. Heidegger, "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" (orig. 1937), in his *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt/Main, 1951), pp. 31–45. Gerald L. Bruns, *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language: A Critical and Historical Study* (New Haven, 1974), has a whole chapter on "Negative Discourse and the Moment before Speech: A Metaphysics of Literary Language" (pp. 189–205), which is well argued and scrupulously avoids any exclusive definition of literary language.

2 This piece, together with "Poesie und Leben," belongs to Hofmannsthal's participation in the *Blätter für die Kunst* circle. Along with "Dichter und leben," it appeared in the *Blätter*, 4. Folge (Nov. 1897), 13–14, while "Poesie und Leben" centers upon a quotation (P1 264) from Stefan George's "Über dichtung" in the *Blätter*, 2. Folge (Oct. 1894), 122. That the thinking in "Bildlicher Ausdruck" is not new in 1897 is also clear from its relation to the 1894 essay "Philosophie des Metaphorischen" (P1 189).

3 In "Der Dichter und diese Zeit" Hofmannsthal says, "ja diese haarscharfe Absonderung des Dichters vom Nicht-Dichter erscheint mir gar nicht möglich" (P2 231); the true function of the poet with respect to speakers and readers in general is defined as "Führerschaft" (P2 235 *et passim*).

4 On the similarity between Hofmannsthal's poem and Goethe's, see especially Alfredo Dornheim, "Das 'Reiselied' Hugo von Hofmannsthals: Eine hyperboreische 'Mignon-Landschaft,' " *Euphorion*, 49 (1955), 50–5.

5 This word has not much interested the poem's commentators. Werner Derungs, *Form und Weltbild der Gedichte Hugo von Hofmannsthals in ihrer Entwicklung* (Zürich, 1960), p. 153, does not seem to notice it; and Herbert Lehnert, *Struktur und Sprachmagie: Zur Methode der Lyrik-Interpretation* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 97, takes it merely as a way of not saying "ich."

6 On "Stimmung" and the treacherous "wir," see "Poesie und Leben" (esp. PI 260–3). There is no need to consider the section "Prologe und Trauerreden" in the 1911 edition, since the word "wir" can be referred there to a reasonably well defined group of people. Jens Rieckmann, *Aufbruch in die Moderne: Die Anfänge des Jungen Wien: Österreichische Literatur und Kritik im Fin de Siècle* (Königstein/Ts., 1985), pp. 126–8, discusses the "wir" of the earliest poems as an attempt to evoke the specific problems of a whole generation. But this particular "wir" is absent in the poems retained for publication in later collections, the one exception being the *Anatol* prologue, where the "wir" is given a context by the image of a *theater*.

7 L. W. Forster, "Hofmannsthal's Art of Lyric Concentration," *German Studies: Presented to Walter Horace Bruford* (London, 1962), p. 228, says, "The idea of a journey through the mountains is conveyed by Hofmannsthal through the title, through the simple use of the pronoun 'uns,' and through the contrast with the following stanzas." But then why does Hofmannsthal change the title to make it *less* specific (WI 355–6)? The progressive or kinetic manner of reading that I contend is required by this poem is similar to the process of reading as described by Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (orig. 1970), best read along with the self-critical comments in Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 21–67, esp. pp. 22–42.

8 See Nietzsche on forgetfulness and the animal at the beginning of *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben.* On speaking as the origin of danger, see Heidegger, "Hölderlin," p. 34: "die Sprache . . . ist die Gefahr aller Gefahren, weil sie allererst die Möglichkeit einer Gefahr schafft."

9 This and the other works used for comparison, "Der Kaiser von China spricht," *Der Kaiser und die Hexe* and *Das Kleine Welttheater*, were all completed within a year or so prior to the "Reiselied."

10 My argument is more specific, but still consonant with Bruns' conclusion, pp. 260–2, concerning the "doubleness" of language and the significance of poetry with regard to the question, "How are speaking and writing related to one another?"

11 On the equivalence, with respect to language, of this plenitude and this emptiness, see e.g. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 19.

12 *Goethes Werke*, "Weimarer Ausgabe," 143 vols. (Weimar, 1887–1918), vol. XXII, p. 332. Further references to this edition are marked "*WA*."

13 This epigram and the one quoted below were composed only a week or so after the "Reiselied" (W1 353, 361).

14 Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 9, in *Werke* (ch. 1, n. 8, above), p. 66. On "das *eine* Weltwesen" compare the artisan: "Ein-Wesen ist's, woran wir uns entzücken!" (W3 140; G 306). For the significance Hofmannsthal attached to this line, see W3 622–3; A 213, 225.

15 "Magie . . . Gabe, das Chaos durch Liebe zu beleben" (A 124), or the idea of "Dichter ein umgekehrter Midas" (A 93).

16 Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, line 252.

17 Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1 (§39), ed. Max Frischeisen-Köhler, in *Schopenhauers sämtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1928), vol. II, p. 236. In a footnote Schopenhauer here quotes a passage from Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XI, ch. 27, which Hofmannsthal in turn, citing Schopenhauer as his source, quotes in the early essay "Maurice Barrès" (P1 51). See also, in *Das Kleine Welttheater*, the speech of the emperor-turned-gardener (W3 136–7; G 300–2).

18 *De Civitate Dei*, XI, ch. 26. See ch. 2, n. 10 above.

19 This is a condensed version of an aphorism from the "Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer" in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. It is printed out of its context in *WA*, pt 2, XI, 128.

4. Death and the fools

1 On 19 July 1892 Hofmannsthal already writes to Schnitzler of his desire to produce something "für die wirkliche brutale Bühne" (H/AS, p. 23). Peter Szondi, "Lyrik und lyrische Dramatik in Hofmannsthals Frühwerk," in his *Satz und Gegensatz: Sechs Essays* (Frankfurt/Main, 1964), pp. 60–1, sees the years between *Der Tor und der Tod* and the Varese plays as decisive. Zelinsky, *Brahman und Basilisk*, pp. 102–13 (ch. 2, n. 3, above), insists that drama for Hofmannsthal is not fully achieved except in the larger forms. Karl Pestalozzi, " 'Daß du nicht enden kannst, das macht dich groß . . . ': Hofmannsthals Schwierigkeiten mit Dramenschlüssen," in W. Mauser (ed.), *Hofmannsthal-Forschungen*, Bd. 7 (Freiburg i. Br., 1983), p. 99, uses a letter to Carossa of April 18, 1808 to locate the turning point in 1806, with the *Vorspiel für ein Puppentheater*.

2 On the actual spectator and the virtual reader in the theater, see my "Cinema, Theater and Opera" (Preface, n. 3, above).

3 The best critics avoid such a contention. For example, Richard Alewyn, "Der Tod des Ästheten" (orig. 1944), in his *Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, 3rd edn (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 64–77, sees at the end of the play a progression from morality to mystery, but refrains from attributing direct general validity to Claudio's words.

4 Porter, "The Theme of Consciousness," p. 95 (ch. 1, n. 1, above) sees this absurdity when he says "that one is necessarily a fool in respect

to death, that no one can relate death to himself"; but he does not support this "no one" with parallels between Claudio and the ghosts. Mauser, *Konfliktbewältigung*, pp. 33–4 (ref. Preface, n. 2), recognizes that "Was Claudio in der Todesstunde 'mit allen Lebenssinnen' erfaßt oder zu erfassen glaubt ... überschreitet ... aber nicht die engen Grenzen der ihm möglichen Einsicht und Lebensführung"; but the condescending diagnosis of Claudio on which this argument rests is questionable. The allusion to *Measure for Measure*, where another Claudio, after being reminded that he is "death's fool" (III, i, 11), awaits death with the words, "To sue to live, I find I seek to die; / And seeking death, find life. Let it come on" (42–3), supports my point that Claudio's last speech is not definitive; for no sooner has Shakespeare's Claudio thus reconciled himself to death than he again, in conversation with his sister, hopes for a way out.

5 Hinrich C. Seeba, *Kritik des ästhetischen Menschen: Hermeneutik und Moral in Hofmannsthals "Der Tor und der Tod"* (Bad Homburg v.d.H., 1970), p. 87, says in a footnote, "Da Claudio auf der Bühne tot niedergesunken ist, scheint der Schauspieler des Freundes ... den Part Claudios im Totenreigen übernommen zu haben." But if Hofmannsthal had wanted to differentiate Claudio from the friend in the dance, he could easily have done so; another actor (say, the "servant") could be used. Seeba also argues strongly that in stylistic character Claudio's speeches are practically indistinguishable from the ghosts' (pp. 113–16). He thus has evidence for the point I have made, but fails to draw the conclusion.

6 Claudio complains of being "Unfähig des Vergessens" (W3 65; G 202). See also Alewyn, "Der Tod des Ästheten," pp. 68–9, and ch. 3, n. 8, above.

7 Szondi, "Lyrik und lyrische Dramatik," p. 68, argues that the poems inherit a new "objectivity" from the plays.

5. Idea, reality and play-acting in *Der Tor und der Tod*

1 Alewyn, "Der Tod des Ästheten," p. 76.

2 Seeba, *Kritik des ästhetischen Menschen*, p. 81 (ch. 4, n. 5, above), says that in the scene with the servant "[Claudios] ichbezogene Gleichgültigkeit setzt ihn ins Unrecht." But in fact Claudio patiently hears the servant out, and had initiated the conversation himself in response to the servant's signs of worry. Richard Thieberger, "Hofmannsthals dramatische Dichtung 'Der Tor und der Tod' " (orig. 1973), in his *Gedanken über Dichter und Dichtungen: Essays aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, ed. A. Faure *et al.* (Bern and Frankfurt/Main, 1982), pp. 97–8, notes that the servant prevents Death from being merely a hallucination, but does not develop the perception.

3 Hofmannsthal handles this situation with great delicacy. The servant does not actually see Death or the revenants; if he did, the quality of

hallucination would simply be obscured. But he does see figures who evidently belong, in general, to the dance of Death, which calls the quality of Death as only Claudio's hallucination into question.

4 See my *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, pp. 284–7 *et passim* (Preface, n. 3, above), where the idea of an "assault upon the audience," merely for their *being* an audience, is developed. Peter Michelsen, "Zeit und Bindung: Zum Werk Hugo von Hofmannsthals," in his *Zeit und Bindung*, p. 16 (ch. 2, n. 1, above), is willing to speak of "drama" only "wo zum Helden ein Gegenüber tritt," and so follows Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (Frankfurt/Main, 1966; orig. 1956), p. 14, who insists that "Wiedergabe des zwischenmenschlichen Bezuges allein" defines dramatic form in our tradition. But this view is historically naive. If, in *Der Tor und der Tod*, the confrontation of the "hero" with something not fully distinct from himself produces a sense of *self*-confrontation for the spectator, is the result necessarily in conflict with either the form or the tradition of drama? Is *Prometheus Bound* focussed on the "interpersonal"? or *Ajax*, or the *Bacchae*? Or *Oedipus at Colonus*, which opens by insisting on its quality as a *self*-confrontation for the Athenian audience: τίνας/χώρους ἀφίγμεθ' ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν; – and the answer is, "Athens."

5 Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 8, p. 59 (ch. 1, n. 8, above).

6 Hofmannsthal achieves this effect by excising, after "an Schmerzes Statt," eleven lines that appear only in the play's first printing (W3 438; G 534).

7 The primary sense of the word "Glück" in this line seems to be not "happiness" or "good fortune" but "chance" ("Zufall," "Tyche," Hofmannsthal's νόημα πρυτανεῦον [A 92, 104]). The grammatical subject is then "alles," and all the nouns belong to the predicate: "everything is chance, hour, wind and passing wave." But there is also the suggestion that art, by accustoming the mind to changing form, teaches us to despise the accidentalness of existence and so denies us the possibilities for happiness ("Glück" in its normal sense) that reside in this accidental world. The ambiguity is complex and daring ("Eine neue und kühne Verbindung von Worten" [P1 265]), since the second sense of "Glück" requires a complete re-interpretation of the syntax: "happiness is potentially present in everything, in the hour, the wind, the passing wave."

8 "Ueber das metaphysische Bedürfnis des Menschen," *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II*, in *Werke*, vols. III–IV, pp. 164–5 (ch. 3, n. 17, above). What makes it likely that Hofmannsthal was thinking of this essay is the quotation in it of two Greek passages, Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155D, and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982^b, in which θαυμάζειν ("Verwunderung") is characterized as the beginning of philosophy. That Hofmannsthal read Schopenhauer very early is shown by a letter of August 8, 1891 (H/RB-H, p. 3) and a footnote to the essay on "Maurice Barrès" (P1 51). The idea of a "Lösung des absoluter

Idealismus" (W3 436) in *Der Tor und der Tod* also suggests this reading.

9 Much of this thought comes to Hofmannsthal from Ernst Mach. See Wunberg, *Der frühe Hofmannsthal*, pp. 23–33 (ch. 1, n. 10, above).

10 We think of the formalist notion of "defamiliarization," or of Shelley's "Defence of Poetry." But Hofmannsthal goes a step further than the formalists. The crucial point in the poetics of *Der Tor und der Tod* is not that the world *is* defamiliarized, but that we are made critically aware of our *need* for defamiliarization.

11 Diotima's teaching on ποίησις (Plato, *Symposium*, 205B-C) appears in the *Buch der Freunde* as, "Aus welcher Ursache auch etwas aus dem Nichtsein in das Sein übertritt, gleichviel, ein dichterisches Erschaffen findet dabei alleweil statt" (A 38).

12 This is a Derridian point (see ch. 2, n. 7, above); and with regard to Hofmannsthal I think Chapter 2 above refutes the idea that poetry somehow rescues the quality of language as pure speaking. Nor will it do to imagine that modern poetry evinces a sincere nostalgic yearning for those earlier times when poetry supposedly was nothing but presence, nothing but voice. Those times never were. Poetry always is (and was) a "marking" in Derrida's sense. And "is not a mark, wherever it is produced, the possibility of writing?" (*Grammatology*, p. 302). Whether writing is actually practiced at a particular time is irrelevant "in structural or eidetic analysis" (*Grammatology*, p. 294); and I contend that in Hofmannsthal's view, poetry by nature understands that its gesture of speaking or singing *throws into relief* the quality of the poem as writing.

13 References to the *Bacchae* are located by line numbers. Hofmannsthal's later plan for a tragedy *Pentheus* still shows affinities with *Der Tor und der Tod*; the theme of aestheticism is suggested by costumes "im Geist Aubrey Beardsleys," and Pentheus has a dialogue with his mother in which he mistakes her for a "Traumbild" (D2 523).

14 The note reads, "eine solche Stelle wie: 'Ich füg mich so, daß Gut und Böse über mich Gewalt ...' [W3 73; G 211] heißt: Gut und Böse hat keine Gewalt: ich glaube sie nicht, weil ich sie nicht vom vitalen Urgrund des Erlebnisses her empfangen habe." But Hofmannsthal is here putting the idea of "Urgrund des Erlebnisses" into Claudio's mind, thus relativizing it. In the same series of notes he defines "Versündigung" as "das Nicht-sich-Halten am engen Gegebenen" (A 241), and speaks of "Ringen um das Notwendige" (A 241), of even *necessity* as something to be struggled for. Or we recall his thought on "erleben" elsewhere: "In Er-leben ist ein aktivischer Ursinn, wie in Er-reichen, Er-eilen; aber niemand hört ihn mehr, und wir haben ein reines Passivum daraus gemacht" (A 11–12). Claudio expects only to *receive* ("empfangen") from the "Urgrund des Erlebnisses," and such passive *waiting* for experience is his fault.

15 On Hofmannsthal's early knowledge of Diderot, see for example P1 154. For references, later, to the *Paradoxe* itself, see A 10, 136.

16 See Erwin Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Berlin, 1970), pp. 360–1, on pre-existence as memory, and Hoppe, *Literatentum*, p. 113 *et passim* (ch. 2, n. 1, above), on magic and memory.

17 In other words, despite Szondi and Michelsen, the symbolic quality of the actor *as* actor is sufficient to make necessary the form of drama, regardless of the personal or interpersonal, subjective or objective quality of the content. Dieter Kimpel, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Dramaturgie und Geschichtsverständnis: Mit einem Ausblick auf Karl Kraus," in R. Grimm (ed.), *Deutsche Dramentheorien: Beiträge zu einer historischen Poetik des Dramas in Deutschland*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1971), vol. II, pp. 451–8, acknowledges the importance of the actor as a philosophical symbol in "Das Theater des Neuen," but does not trace the idea back through Hofmannsthal's career.

18 On this poem and *Der Tor und der Tod*, see A 214, 220.

19 William H. Rey, "Die Drohung der Zeit in Hofmannsthals Frühwerk," *Euphorion*, 48 (1954), 297.

20 On the joy of experiencing death vicariously, compare Gabriel's speculation about animal sacrifice in "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" (P2 88–9).

21 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 2nd edn (Tübingen, 1965), p. 365 *et passim*; E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, 1973; orig. 1967), pp. 68–126.

22 "Interpretive community" is the central concept in Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class*? (ch. 3, n. 7, above).

23 Wolfgang Greisenegger, "Der Theater-Raum Hofmannsthals," in W. Mauser (ed.), *Hofmannsthal und das Theater: Die Vorträge des Hofmannsthal Symposiums Wien 1979*, Hofmannsthal Forschungen 6 (Wien, 1981), p. 43, quotes the essay "Über die Pantomime" (P3 50), which in turn quotes Lucian, "On the Dance," in support of the contention that Hofmannsthal's dramatic figures, especially in the early works, "haben letztlich nur einen Partner: den *einzelnen* Zuschauer, der in ihre Welt blickt, dem sie ihr Herz öffnen." But Hofmannsthal *opposes* dance or pantomime to drama (P3 48–9), and with respect to both forms stresses the problematics of the relation between individual and collective ("individuell," "persönlich" – "generisch," "allgemein" [P3 50]). Neither this essay, therefore, nor "Die Bühne als Traumbild" (P2 63–7), nor the relation to Henry van de Velde (Greisenegger, "Der Theater-Raum Hofmannsthals" pp. 44–7), justifies a one-sided response to the question of whether Hofmannsthal conceives his dramas for the audience as individuals or as a body, especially since the collective is emphasized in "Das Spiel vor der Menge" (P3 60–5). The *problem* is what interests Hofmannsthal: how a necessary communal level of understanding can be realized in an audience who understand their understanding as an individual faculty. On "understanding" in the theater, see also my "Cinema, Theater and Opera."

6. Theatrical philosophy: from *Der Tor und der Tod* to *Theater in Versen*

1 Volume I of Hofmannsthal's *Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1924) is entitled *Gedichte, Lyrische Dramen* and includes more than just the "Kleine Dramen" of the 1911 edition.

2 *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin: Dramatisches Gedicht in einem Aufzug* (Berlin, 1899); *Die Hochzeit der Sobeide: Dramatisches Gedicht in einem Aufzug* (Berlin, 1899); *Der Thor und der Tod: Ein dramatisches Gedicht* (Berlin, 1900). Relevant passages in the correspondence include: B1 230, 235, 237; B2 44–5; H/SG, pp. 130–3. Also B1 276–7, 278–9, which are convincingly redated by Günther Erken, "Hofmannsthal-Chronik: Beitrag zu einer Biographie," *LJ*, N. F. 3 (1962), 256, n. 14.

3 The speech on "Treue" is seen by Hofmannsthal as "decisive" (A 217, 228), but not necessarily *valid* as Claudio means it (A 241). Cf. ch. 4, nn. 3, 4; ch. 5, n. 14, above.

4 See P1 41, the idea that what "lives" for us in art cannot possibly be its explicable "Lehre"; also P1 191–3 on the proper *artistic* form for a discussion of metaphor; and P1 232 on the "professor's" helplessness when faced with a Mitterwurzer.

5 *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 8, p. 55. On Nietzsche's theory of drama see *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, pp. 239–46.

6 The prototype of the dictatorial artist for Hofmannsthal was Stefan George, who in fact later wrote to him, "Ich war des festen glaubens dass wir ' Sie und ich ' durch jahre in unsrem schrifttum eine sehr heilsame diktatur hätten üben können" (H/SG, p. 150).

7 The idea of "un théâtre statique," which permits the tragic quality of existence as such to assert itself, is from Maurice Maeterlinck, "Le Tragique quotidien," in his *Le Trésor des Humbles*, 21st edn (Paris, 1907), p. 169. And Maeterlinck appears to draw a conclusion similar to Hofmannsthal's concerning the mimetic quality of drama in the "Préface" to his collected plays, *Théâtre complet*, 3 vols. in one (Paris, Genève, 1979; rpt. of 1901–19), p. xii: "Mais le poète dramatique ... est obligé de faire descendre dans la vie réelle, dans la vie de tous les jours, l'idée qu'il se fait de l'inconnu." I allude to Blanchot, and to Roland Barthes, *Le Degré Zéro de L'Écriture* (Paris, 1953), because it seems to me that the thought there is related to the argument I am making. In *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, p. 294, I tried to systematize the ideas involved by means of the concept of "saturation"; "minimum" saturation would characterize drama most open to the accidentalness of the world.

8 On the combination of concealment and revelation see Martin Stern, "Hofmannsthals verbergendes Enthüllen: Seine Schaffensweise in den vier Fassungen der Florindo/Cristina-Komödie," *DVLG*, 33 (1959), 38–62, revised in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Sibylle Bauer, Wege der Forschung, Bd. 183 (Darmstadt, 1968), pp. 77–86.

9 The Baron's type of existence is repeatedly related to the idea of poetic invention (e.g. D1 166, 172, 222, 256), which suggests that by taking poetic invention too literally we sacrifice our own life's cohesion.

7. Chandos and his neighbors

1 I use a terminology that is neither philosophically rigorous nor especially subtle, but has the advantage of simplicity. Some problems that must be kept in mind are mentioned in ch. 3, n. 1. Also, my use of the concept of priority engages the problem of the origin of language, in the classical formulations of, say, Rousseau and Herder, and as developed by Derrida and by Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," in his *Blindness and Insight* (New York, 1971), pp. 102–41.

2 The action of *Der Schwierige* takes place during the war, in 1917, and the audience is meant to know this. In Act 1 Stani says of Hans Karl's episode with Antoinette, "Nein, aber das vor zwei Jahren. Im zweiten Kriegsjahr" (L2 178); Vinzenz's words, "nach der Kriegszeit" (L2 149), could refer to the future or even to Hans Karl's *personal* time at the front; that Hans Karl's affair with Antoinette begins in 1915 is confirmed by the dates of the letters (L2 172). See Wolfgang Frühwald, "Die sprechende Zahl: Datensymbolismus in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Lustspiel 'Der Schwierige,'" *JDSG*, 22 (1978), 572–88, and Martin Stern, "Wann entstand und spielt 'Der Schwierige'?" *JDSG*, 23 (1979), 350–65. Stern asserts correctly that Hofmannsthal's concern is "nicht die naturalistisch abgeschilderte Realität von 1917" (p. 357); but he himself comes down too strongly for a postwar dating of the fiction. He speaks of "Hofmannsthals Entschluß zu diesem 1917 eigentlich unerhört kühnen Plan, den Weltkrieg als abgeschlossen zu behandeln" (p. 354), without considering the possibility that this "boldness" is meant to characterize Viennese society *in* the play; the "Appell an die oberen Stände" requires just such boldness of its readers, that they manage to treat the war lightly, as if it were past. Wolfram Mauser, "Österreich und das Österreichische in Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige*," *RG*, 12 (1982), 109–30, shows that the play's situation is one "in dem der Krieg gegenwärtig ist" (p. 112), which produces the recognition of Viennese "Lebensart" as a "Verdienst" (p. 113) especially in wartime.

3 J. B. Bednall, "From High Language to Dialect: A Study in Hofmannsthal's Change of Medium," in F. Norman (ed.), *Hofmannsthal: Studies in Commemoration* (London, 1963), pp. 95–6, and then Wunberg, *Der frühe Hofmannsthal*, pp. 110–11 (ch. 1, n. 10, above), point out that Chandos' difficulties with language are related to Bacon's thought on the treachery of "idols." Chandos thus writes to Bacon about a crisis that by rights Bacon himself should be undergoing as a consequence of his own thought. Michèle Pauget, *L'Interrogation*

sur l'art dans l'oeuvre essayistique de Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Analyse de configurations (Frankfurt/Main, 1984), pp. 281–9, offers an excellent summary, criticism and development of the discussion of relations between Chandos and Bacon. Earlier contributions include H. Stephan Schultz, "Hofmannsthal and Bacon: The Sources of the Chandos Letter," *CL*, 13 (1961), 1–15, and Rolf Tarot, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Daseinsformen und dichterische Struktur* (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 364–73.

4 On this point, see Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis*, p. 121 (ch. 1, n. 1, above), Richard Brinkmann, "Hofmannsthal und die Sprache," *DVLG*, 35 (1961), 69–95, and Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, pp. 143–4 (ch. 5, n. 16, above). Mauser, *Konfliktbewältigung*, p. 120 (Preface, n. 2, above), restricts Chandos' "Sprachskepsis" to "das *gewohnte* Denken mit bestimmten Kategorien und das *gewohnte* Sprechen." But especially the relation of the letter to Bacon's writings makes this position questionable. Chandos in effect deconstructs Bacon's criticism of idols by showing that it does not itself escape the treachery it criticizes; and this point, once recognized, is evidently applicable to the "Brief" itself, so that an infinitely self-undermining process is generated that presents crisis as the *normal* state of language. Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig, "Der 'Anstand des Schweigens': Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler," in his *Rhetorik des Schweigens: Versuch über den Schatten literarischer Rede* (Frankfurt/Main, 1981), p. 159, offers a brilliant but inaccurate formulation: "Die Sprachnot des Chandos ist dies: nur noch rhetorisch über die Not, rhetorisch reden zu müssen, reden zu können." The case is better stated as: being able to speak ironically about the situation of having to speak ironically.

5 See Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, pp. 152–3, for a different interpretation of essentially the same perceptions concerning the letter's structure.

6 Slightly misquoted from Goethe's letter to Carl August of March 28, 1788. Goethe says, "ins Gebiet der Lüge," not "Liebe."

7 In the notes for Scandinavia Hofmannsthal places much emphasis on Electra's forgetting the axe (P3 354–5), as an indication that "sie ist doch Frau," that her absolute commitment to the idea of justice always retains the character of a violation of natural immediacy.

8 This, in essence, is the interpretation of *Elektra* in Walter Jens, *Hofmannsthal und die Griechen* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 44–74. It does not seem to me that the objections raised by William H. Rey, *Weltentzweiung und Weltversöhnung in Hofmannsthals griechischen Dramen* (Philadelphia, 1962), are more than corrections to Jens' philosophical emphasis. Heinz Wetzel, "Elektras Kult der Tat – 'freilich mit Ironie behandelt,'" *JFDH* (1979), 354–68, makes an argument similar to mine by distinguishing strictly between the deed, as carried out by Orestes, and the "cult" of the deed as practiced by Electra. Lothar Wittmann, *Sprachthematik und dramatische Form im Werke Hofmannsthals* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Mainz, 1966), p. 81, insists,

"in der trunkenen Rede [Elektras] kommt die zeitlose Gegenwart der mythischen Weltordnung ins Wort." But the sense of disorder in the play is too strong to permit this idea. Even supposing Wittmann were right, would we have to imagine the *audience* as ecstatically caught up in this "mythical world-order"?

9 Walter Jens, "Der Mensch und die Dinge: Die Revolution der deutschen Prosa," *Akzente*, 4 (1957), 322–3, suggests that the sort of poet Chandos deliberately stops short of becoming is the author of *Malte Laurids Brigge*. See also W. Jens, *Von deutscher Rede* (München, 1969), pp. 151, 154–5, and Franz Kuna, "The Expense of Silence: Sincerity and Strategy in Hofmannsthal's *Chandos Letter*," *PEGS*, N. S. 40 (1969/70), 69–94.

10 Wetzel (p. 367), referring to Hofmannsthal's remark that *Elektra* would have been "more beautiful" and "purer" without Orestes (H/EvB, p. 51), speaks of the "Erkenntnis, daß die Reinheit der Kunstwerke und die Teilnahme am tätigen, sozial verantwortlichen Leben nicht miteinander zu versöhnen sind."

11 For Hofmannsthal's growing preoccupation, after Chandos, with the idea of "das Andere," see P2 82, P3 117, and the notes to *Andreas*.

12 Brinkmann, "Hofmannsthal und die Sprache," pp. 90–1.

13 Ibid. p. 91. See also Pestalozzi, *Sprachskepsis*, pp. 121ff., on the language of the letter as a social phenomenon. "Conversation" here of course does not mean *trivial* conversation. See nn. 3 and 4 above.

14 Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 68 (ch. 3, n. 1, above). Quotations below are located by page number in parentheses.

15 Roswitha Lindemann, "Der junge Hofmannsthal: Sprachtheorie und Dichtungstheorie," in W. A. Koch (ed.), *Semiotische Versuche zu literarischen Strukturen* (Hildesheim and New York, 1979), pp. 143–279, points out the similarity between Chandos' goal before the crisis and his experiences afterward (pp. 168–9), but insists that in both cases the goal is achieved, and that the post-crisis experiences are different in being focussed on "Nicht-Sprachliches, Nicht-Begriffliches" (p. 169). She argues very carefully that Chandos' position on the nature of language is "Sprachinstrumentalismus" (p. 172), a belief in the reality "behind" language; but she uses the *same* perceptions to argue that Chandos recognizes himself as the "Strukturator" (p. 167) of his experience, recognizes "daß er die Strukturen der Gegenstände quasi erzeugt" (p. 171). And what *is* this structuring of experience by the mind, what is its name, if not language? All the elements of a Heideggerian argument are present in Lindemann, without being put together.

16 Richard Exner, review of Ewald Rösch, *Komödien Hofmannsthals*, in *AfdA*, 75 (1964), 87.

17 The remarks by Walther Brecht, "Hugo von Hofmannsthals 'Ad me ipsum' und seine Bedeutung," *JFDH* (1930), 319–53, accompanying those notes' publication, use for pre-existence the images of sleep and

dream (pp. 332–3, 339), and the scholarly tradition has never fully cleared the matter up. Tarot, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 172, for example, relates pre-existence to Cassirer's "mythisches Bewußtsein." But it is difficult to see, in view of Hofmannsthal's ascription to pre-existence of "magische Herrschaft über das Wort," how Tarot can assert "Zur 'Äußerung' gehört immer Loslösung aus der Phase des mythischen Bewußtseins [i.e. pre-existence], denn erst dann wird Aussage möglich."

18 Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, pp. 360–1. Cf. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. D. F. Swenson (Princeton, 1936), p. 80: "[for Socrates] the individual has an existence prior to his coming into being and remembers himself, so that the Recollection here involved is his preexistence, and not a recollection about his preexistence." Pre-existence is not the *object* of recollection but the *act* of recollection. See also Brecht's remarks on Hofmannsthal and Platonic ἀνάμνησις (pp. 352–3 and footnote). Hofmannsthal derives his early knowledge of Kierkegaard in part from a German volume, *Zur Psychologie der Sünde, der Bekehrung und des Glaubens*, übers. Chr. Schrempf (Leipzig, 1890), which includes the *Philosophical Fragments*; according to Michael Hamburger, "Hofmannsthals Bibliothek," *Euphorion*, 55 (1961), 37, Hofmannsthal's copy of this book has "viele Stellen angestrichen." I use an English translation because I have not been able to obtain the Schrempf volume. Ellen Ritter, "Über den Begriff der Praeexistenz bei Hugo von Hofmannsthal," *GRM*, N.F. 22 (1972), 197–200, shows that the idea of "preëxistence" in Lafcadio Hearn's *Kokoro* influenced "Ad me ipsum," but Hofmannsthal did not simply follow Hearn. Pre-existence for Hearn is the existence of my soul's elements before my own unique birth, thus not my "Zustand" at all, and certainly not a "Glorreicher, aber gefährlicher Zustand" (A 213). Kierkegaard's "Recollection," however, *is* a personal "Zustand."

19 In its basic shape this idea is of course by no means Hofmannsthal's property. It corresponds closely, for instance: to Lessing's argument in §73 of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* that God, and God alone, can be totally present in his own conscious image of himself; to Kleist's idea of infinite consciousness; to Schopenhauer's idea of "das Wunder κατ' ἐξοχήν" in §18 of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I*, in *Werke*, vol. II, p. 132 (ch. 3, n. 17, above); and to Nietzsche's ideal artist, who is compared to a painted picture able to turn its eyes and look at the painting, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 5, p. 44 (ch. 1, n. 8, above).

20 Hoppe, *Literatentum*, p. 113 (ch. 2, n. 1, above).

21 This point is grasped most clearly by Bednall (p. 102).

22 Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 7.

23 Ibid., p. 6. There are yet further indications of the importance the *Philosophical Fragments* must have had for Hofmannsthal. The tragic principle, for instance, that everything is known in the world, is perhaps Hofmannsthal's adoption in his tragedies of what Kierkegaard under-

stands as the characteristic Hellenic attitude, as opposed to the Christian postulate that the Unknown exists and is God (pp. 31ff.).

8. Werther and Chandos

1 For comprehensive treatments, see Grete Schaeder, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Goethe* (Hameln, 1947), the "Goethe-Register" in Richard Exner, *Index Nominum zu Hugo von Hofmannsthals Gesammelten Werken* (Heidelberg, 1976), pp. 207–17, and the notes in the *Sämtliche Werke*.

2 On the crisis itself, see B2 46, 61, 63, 69; H/LvA, p. 157; H/SG, p. 173. H. A. Hammelmann, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (New Haven, 1957), p. 17, suggests the point I will make about the intention of the "Brief," but does not question the achievement of that intention: "Hofmannsthal was able ... to face and state, and in this way to overcome, his experience."

3 Paul Requadt, "Sprachverleugnung und Mantelsymbolik im Werke Hofmannsthals," *DVLG*, 29 (1955), 265–6.

4 *Elektra* was to have been followed by an *Orest in Delphi* (see B2 74, 132); *Ödipus und die Sphinx* and *König Ödipus* by an *Ödipus auf Kolonos* (B2 136).

5 *WA*, XIX, 8. Further references to *Werther* are located by page number in this volume.

6 September 9, 1902, H/LvA, p. 157. The idea of "inner conversations" in this letter is paralleled in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*WA*, XXVIII, 207–8).

7 *WA*, XXVIII, 208. Quotations from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* are located by page in parentheses.

8 See ch. 7 n. 9, above.

9 Tarot, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, pp. 222–3 (footnote), 361 (ch. 7, n. 3, above). The inner quote is from Alewyn, *Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 174.

10 See Tarot, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 360, who does not heed Schultz's remark (ch. 7, n. 3, above): "If we follow Hofmannsthal's lead and turn to Bacon's essays, we do not find there the characteristic 'Sprechton' of 'Ein Brief.'"

11 See Andrian, "Erinnerungen an meinen Freund," in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Der Dichter im Spiegel der Freunde*, ed. H. A. Fiechtner, 2nd edn (Bern and München, 1963), p. 75.

12 Tarot, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 376; the reference in square brackets is to p. 375.

13 *WA*, XXVIII, 215. Hofmannsthal himself, interestingly, later planned a kind of adaptation of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (A 164).

14 On the essays, dialogues and fictional and open letters of this period see Mary E. Gilbert, "Hofmannsthal's Essays, 1900–1908: A Poet in Transition," in Norman (ed.), *Hofmannsthal: Studies*, pp. 29–52 (ch. 7, n. 3, above).

15 The letter referred to must be Goethe's to Schiller of December 9, 1797.

16 In the summary of his lecture, Hofmannsthal sees "Als Wurzel von Goethes untragischer Anlage ... sein mangelndes Verhältnis zur Geschichte" (B2 65). Does this idea include the idea of a general lack of sense for development over extended periods of time?

17 On realism and morality in the theater, see, from this period, B2 72; on *Pompilia* and its difficulty, B2 73–4, H/RB-H, p. 109, H/AS, pp. 151–2.

18 The coupling of *Elektra* and *Jedermann* here, in the Scandinavian notes, may in some degree be accidental, since these happened to be the two plays of Hofmannsthal's being given in Stockholm when he was there. See Erken, "Hofmannsthal-Chronik," p. 288, n. 17 (ch. 6, n. 2, above).

19 See P3 62 for Hans Sachs. That Hofmannsthal was not satisfied with *Jedermann* either is clear from his efforts to convince himself of its virtues, especially "Das alte Spiel von Jedermann" (P3 114–32). There may be a subtle irony in that essay, which compares the writing of works like *Jedermann* to a selling of one's shadow, and speaks deprecatingly of this world, "wo auf partikuläres Schattenwerfen so viel gehalten wird" (P3 117). *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, after all, was already planned.

9. Hofmannsthal's return

1 See Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 156 (ch. 5, n. 16, above). Further quotations from Kobel in this chapter are located by page number in parentheses.

2 Kobel's opinion is widely shared. Mary E. Gilbert, "Hofmannsthal's Essays," p. 47 (ch. 8, n. 14, above), argues that for the homecomer "the process of dissociation has gone a step further" than for Chandos, which is true only insofar as we recognize that the path along which this "step further" is taken is *circular*.

3 See Theodore Ziolkowski, "James Joyces Epiphanie und die Überwindung der empirischen Welt in der modernen deutschen Prosa," *DVLG*, 35 (1961), 594–616. Ziolkowski's idea of "epiphany" is more exact than Kobel's "heightened instant," but as applied to Hofmannsthal it is still not exact enough. In distinguishing between epiphany and expressionistic vision, Ziolkowski says, "Zunächst einmal gehören Entrükkung und Ekstase zu den Grundhaltungen des visionären Erlebnisses, wogegen die Epiphanie – nicht nur bei Joyce, sondern auch bei [Hofmannsthal, unter anderen] – gerade durch die analytische Nüchternheit der Betrachtung auffällt" (p. 603). Although this does apply quite well to the homecomer, it does not apply "haargenau" (p. 607) to Chandos, who speaks of his illuminations as a "Hinüberfließen" (P2 15) which, while perhaps not exactly a "Verschmelzung von Subjekt and Objekt" (p. 603), is also not exactly a "sober" recognition. I will use below the distinction between form and substance ("Wesen" [P2 303]

and sheer "etwas ... sein" [P2 16], *whatness* and sheer *otherness*) to distinguish between the homecomer's experiences and Chandos'. Chandos emphasizes that the whatness or "Wesen" of the object is unimportant compared to its *function* as "Gefäß meiner Offenbarung" (P2 14).

4 Compare also the note from 1904 on colors and their function "dem Nichts ein Gesicht zu geben" (A 138). Szondi, "*Das Kleine Welttheater*," in his (posthumous) *Das lyrische Drama des Fin de siècle*, p. 328, reads the artisan's "Ein-Wesen" correctly, "im ausschließenden und nicht im einschließenden Sinn." Bednall (ch. 7, n. 3, above), says, "the poet is conscious of nothing more urgently than the peremptory claims upon him of things in their particularity, their ontological uniqueness" (p. 100), and quotes very aptly the allusion to Goethe's "Märchen" in the "Gespräch über Gedichte" (P2 99). Precisely by insisting on the "Wesenhaftestes ... Eigenstes" of each particular thing, poetry finds itself, like Goethe's will-o'-the-wisps, sucking only the *gold* out of things and failing to differentiate by form, which is Chandos' crisis.

5 In 1906 there is a note referring to *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (A 150).

6 This dialogue was to have been a continuation of "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" (B2 129–30). See also Michael Böhler, "Soziale Einheit und hermeneutische Universalität bei Hofmannsthal," *Hofmannsthal Blätter*, no. 15 (1976), 139–51, esp. pp. 140–1, 145–7.

7 An objection to the whole argument on structure will be that Hofmannsthal during his lifetime published "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" only in two separate groups, I–III and IV–V, and that in *Die prosaischen Schriften gesammelt*, vol. III (Berlin, 1917), only IV and V appear. But in the first place, IV and V contain the essence of the whole, the loss of contact with substance and the salvation through form; and in the second place, since an affirmation of cultural citizenship is one of the work's implications for the artist (see below), the lengthy attack on shallow modern Germans in I–III would have confused the issue.

8 The distinction between "Tat" and "Werk," though not exactly in this form, is central in "Die Taten und der Ruhm," where it is remarked that "Zur Seele ... spricht nur der Geist" (P3 251), that deeds do not communicate.

9 The plan for *Heintl* leads further in 1908: "Verschwendung. – Inhaltsangabe eines Dramas von Granville Barker in der 'Schaubühne' ... Ich gestalte mir das Szenarium eines ähnlichen Stückes (es ist eine Art Gegenstück zu 'D. Heintl')" (A 159). And this new plan, *Der Verschwender*, becomes *Der Schwierige*. See Roger C. Norton, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige* and Granville-Barker's *Waste*," *CL*, 14 (1962), 272–9.

10 We think of Sigismund's experience with the rats and his idea of words as "Wirbel" (D3 428; cf. P2 13–15).

11 Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (New York, 1905), read by Hofmannsthal in 1907. See Alewyn, "Andreas," in his *Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, pp. 128–44. Cf. the Jekyll/Hyde motif in *Heintl* (A 158).

12 It is important to Hofmannsthal to think that his development holds together; he likes to imagine it as a *spiral*, constantly returning to the same points on higher levels. See H/RB, p. 86, and cf. H/RS, p. 187.

10. Missed meetings in *Der Schwierige*

1 That Hofmannsthal also returns to lyric poetry in 1907, with "Vor Tag" and perhaps "Des alten Mannes Sehnsucht nach dem Sommer" – but see W1 414 – need not disturb us. The distinction between lyrical and mimetic *modes* does not need to coincide with a distinction between *genres*; much of Hofmannsthal's work in the lyrical mode is executed in the genre of drama. Compare the distinction between mimetic modes (as a subgroup of the fictional) and thematic modes in Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York, 1965; orig. 1957), pp. 33–4, 52–3.

2 In his first mention of the idea to Strauss in 1911, Hofmannsthal emphasizes the configuration in this "Zaubermärchen, worin zwei Männer und zwei Frauen einander gegenüberstehen" (H/RS, p. 112); he later speaks of "die Wahl eines fast kontrapunktisch strengen Stoffes, die Schematisierung der Gefühlswelt" (H/RS, pp. 213–14).

3 Alewyn, "Andreas," pp. 158, 157, 154.

4 What Hofmannsthal admires in Molière is that the "Relationen" among character-types are presented "mit einer Komplettheit und einem Reichtum der Skala ... worein man sich vertiefen muß" (A 178).

5 Jürgen Rothenberg, " 'Durchs Reden kommt ja alles auf der Welt zustande': Zum Aspekt des Komischen in Hugo von Hofmannsthals Lustspiel 'Der Schwierige,'" *JDSG*, 21 (1977), 393–417, lumps the missed meetings together with "Mißverständnisse" in language as results of "das absichtsvolle Wort" (p. 397). Hans Karl, we hear, "beherrscht die Kunst der Konversation," the art of "absichtslose Unterhaltung" (p. 409). But we never *see* Hans Karl speaking "without purpose," and the problem of language in the play includes the question of whether speaking without purpose is even possible.

6 Antoinette confuses the issue by calling Hans Karl "Monstros selbstsüchtig" (L2 241), "monstros eitel und selbstsüchtig" (L2 244), "ein Zyniker, ein Egoist, ein Teufel" (L2 247); but she is not in the proper frame of mind for making the distinction between self-love and selfishness. Helene is more careful when she says to Neuhoff, "Die Eitelkeit erstarrt ihn ja nicht, durch die alle andern steif und hölzern werden" (L2 255–6); but she does not *deny* the applicability of the word "Eitelkeit."

7 Ewald Rösch, *Komödien Hofmannsthals*, 2nd edn (Marburg, 1968),

pp. 121–8, makes a great deal of Stani's being Hans Karl's "zweites Selbst" (L2 152), but insists on classifying him as a "pre-existent" stage that Hans Karl must overcome. The search by critics – e.g. also Franz Norbert Mennemeier, "Hofmannsthal: Der Schwierige," in *Das deutsche Drama vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. B. von Wiese, vol. II (Düsseldorf, 1958), pp. 244–64 – for mechanical applications of the "Ad me ipsum" terminology to Hans Karl's supposed "development," is never justified by the text of either the comedy or "Ad me ipsum." Philip Manger, "Once More 'Praeexistenz–Tyche–Existenz' in Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige*," *Seminar*, 6 (1970), 48–62, offers useful but still insufficiently radical criticisms of Mennemeier and Rösch.

8 Hofmannsthal finds special difficulty in *Der Schwierige*, "weil eine Gesellschaftscomödie ... mit diesem Begriff der Discretion steht u. fällt, und das Bizarre u. besonders Schwere meiner Aufgabe darin besteht, diese Forderung mit den inneren Forderungen einer so indiscreten Form, als es die Comödie ist, übereinzubringen. Immerhin hoffe ich daß etwas entsteht, das, wenn eine abermals fast unerreichliche Bedingung: discrete Darstellung [the non-realization of obvious plot possibilities?] – erreicht werden kann, zu bestehen vermag" (H/LvA, p. 253).

9 Compare my "Cinema, Theater and Opera," p. 18, on Brecht's "Einverständnis" as an exploiting of the situation in the theater. Günther Erken, *Hofmannsthals dramatischer Stil: Untersuchungen zur Symbolik und Dramaturgie* (Tübingen, 1967), p. 20, goes further than I do when he compares the social to "ein lockerer Hintergrundmagnet" that works mysteriously to produce particular configurations of characters on the stage.

10 Emil Staiger, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal: 'Der Schwierige'" (orig. 1941–2), in *Meisterwerke deutscher Sprache aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 3rd edn (Zürich, 1957), p. 257, suggests that Neuhoff's prophecy has been fulfilled: "Die Welt, in der, nach Neuhoffs Wort, die Krisen des Jahrhunderts zur Entscheidung kommen, ist in zwei Jahrzehnten mehr und mehr vom Stil und Sinn des 'Schwierigen' abgerückt." Alfred Doppler, "Die Thematisierung der Konversation: Hugo von Hofmannsthals Lustspiel 'Der Schwierige,'" in his *Wirklichkeit im Spiegel der Sprache: Aufsätze zur Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts in Österreich* (Wien, 1975), pp. 68–9, agrees with Neuhoff but (like Neuhoff) gets the nuances wrong when he relates the "unbegrenzt wiederholbare Redewendungen" of "Konversation" to a belief in "die 'gottgewollte' Ordnung des absolutistischen Staates des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts."

11 I say "violations" despite Mennemeier, "Der Schwierige," p. 266, who insists on "der formal der romanischen Tradition der Komik verpflichteten Ansatz des Lustspiels." Hofmannsthal himself emphasizes the *contrast* between Romance tradition and his own "raffinierte Indirectheit" (H/PZ, p. 182). The genre Hofmannsthal envisages in

Der Schwierige is something like what he sees in "'Tasso' und 'Der Misanthrop' zwischen Komödie und Tragödie" (A 185).

11. Hans Karl's return

1 See the argument on *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* in *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, pp. 22–56.

2 Hofmannsthal, "Briefe an Rudolf Pannwitz," *Mesa*, 5 (1955), 23. For a rather excessive reaction to this letter see Horst Wittman, "Hofmannsthals *Der Schwierige*: Die Potentialität des Leichten," *Seminar*, 10 (1974), 274–7.

3 The idea of society or comedy as a resistance against reality is suggested by Stern, "Wann entstand ...?" p. 363 (ch. 7, n. 2, above), on Hofmannsthal's turn away from politics in 1917. Böhler, pp. 144–6 (ch. 9, n. 6, above), also sees, around the end of the war, the turn toward a new kind of political consciousness by way of literature and philosophy.

4 E.g. Hans Glinz, "Die Leistung der Sprache für zwei Menschen," in *Sprache: Schlüssel zur Welt: Festschrift für Leo Weisgerber* (Düsseldorf, 1959), pp. 87–105.

5 Roger C. Norton, "Hofmannsthal's 'Magische Werkstätte': Unpublished Notebooks from the Harvard Collection," *GR*, 36 (1961), 62.

6 A counter-argument might be developed from the perception of Ehrhard Bahr, "Dezenz der Rede: Zur Sprachproblematik in Hofmannsthals Lustspiel 'Der Schwierige,'" in W. Kudzus *et al.* (eds.), *Austriaca: Beiträge zur österreichischen Literatur: Festschrift für Heinz Politzer* (Tübingen, 1975), p. 293, that Hans Karl's and Helene's *simultaneous* removing of their coats shows their achieved love as a "Simultanentschluß, der nicht in sprachlicher Auseinandersetzung gefaßt wird." My response is that the harmony of action here is a picture of "necessity," not "reality," a necessity that still has to be created *in* language.

7 We recall the motif of a woman's chasing a man into the night from *Abenteurer* and *Sobeide*, where it clearly does not go together with the idea of a permanent relationship.

8 Hofmannsthal, *Silvia im "Stern,"* ed. Martin Stern (Bern, Stuttgart, 1959), p. 114. On discretion see H/LvA, p. 253.

9 Wittmann, *Sprachthematik*, p. 145 (ch. 7, n. 8, above). Page numbers from Wittmann are given in parentheses below.

10 Hart Nibbrig, "Der 'Anstand des Schweigens,'" p. 159 (ch. 7, n.4, above), goes a step beyond Wittmann: "[Hans Karl] zahlt nicht ... in sprachlichem 'Papiergeld,' zahlt überhaupt nicht, sondern besitzt, anstatt zu tauschen, adlig, das 'Gold' seines Schweigens." My point is that the whole distinction between paper language and gold language is false in a manner characteristic of Neuhoff.

11 Hamburger, "Hofmannsthals Bibliothek," p. 72 (ch. 7, n. 18, above).

12 Manger, "Once More 'Praeexistenz–Tyche–Existenz,'" p. 61 (ch. 10, n. 7, above).
13 Staiger, "Der Schwierige," p. 250 (ch. 10, n. 10, above).
14 Invisible plot is also needed in *Der Rosenkavalier*, to explain the Marschallin's arrival in the last scene. See Dirk Hoffmann, "Zum Auftritt der Marschallin im dritten Akt des 'Rosenkavaliers,'" *Hofmannsthal Blätter*, nos. 23/24 (1980–1), 94–101. In the final version, it must be inferred that the Marschallin had known about Oktavian's masquerade beforehand, and now comes along to prevent matters getting out of control. One of her worries, which Hoffmann does not mention, is that Ochs will draw inferences *about her and Oktavian* (which he does) from the identity of Mariandel.
15 Letter of February 14, 1921, H/AW, p. 31. The formulation here is interesting because it recalls the note, "Jugendstadium: Magie. Varese. Später Gestaltung" (A 232). By combining the idea of "Gestaltung" with that of the metaphysical (i.e. magical), Hofmannsthal suggests that in *Der Schwierige* he has reintegrated his development.

12. Society as drama

1 Martin Stern, "In illo tempore: Über Notizen und Varianten zu Hofmannsthals Lustspiel 'Der Schwierige,'" *WW*, 8 (1957), 118.
2 Hofmannsthal probably has the saying "Individuum est ineffabile" from Goethe's letter to Lavater of September 1780.
3 On discretion even in philosophical language, see the quotation from Pascal, *Lettres Provinciales*, XI, in the *Buch der Freunde* (A 21).
4 See Stern, "In illo tempore," p. 116, on Neuhoff, Neugebauer, Nowak.
5 Neuhoff's ridiculous assault on Helene seems an echo of Scholz's upon Anna at the end of Act IV of *Der Marquis von Keith*. On Wedekind, see Hofmannsthal's letter to Bahr of February 1904 (B2 102).
6 *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 7, pp. 52–3.
7 Hofmannsthal himself, in 1905, during his tragic phase, had had a strong sense of being directly exposed to the world-whole; see his note on "Weltzustand" (A 142). Later, more or less directly in connection with *Der Schwierige*, he says, "ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel ist vollends ein Unding, denn die bürgerliche Welt ist die Welt des sozial Bedingten und die Tragödie entfaltet sich am sozial Unbedingten" (P4 40).
8 See W. E. Yates, "Der Schwierige: The Comedy of Discretion," *MAL*, 10 (1977), 7, on Hans Karl's "artistic temperament."
9 Hofmannsthal did want, however, to have the play premiered in Vienna. This is why he writes Wildgans. On this matter and its difficulties, see Stern, "Wann entstand . . .?" p. 361, and the sources he mentions.
10 This argument fulfils in part a promise I made in *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, p. 320, concerning Hofmannsthal and Brecht as parallel figures. The corresponding argument on Brecht, pp. 329–30 of

my book, has to do with the audience's metaphorically ceding the valley in *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, even if they are not a socialist audience.

11 The paradox of detachment and involvement is a main theme of *Modern Drama and German Classicism*. A related theoretical argument, on actual spectator and virtual reader, is advanced in my "Cinema, Theater and Opera."

12 On the need for illusion or forgetting, see *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 7, and *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, ch. 1, *Werke*, pp. 52–3, 245–8. One might argue that Hofmannsthal's tragedies of naked truth attempt not to realize the thought of *Geburt* but to tragedize the situation of illusionlessness described in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*.

13 This thought parallels Nietzsche's goal of *perfecting* (not destroying) Socratic culture. See my "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics," *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 420–33.

14 A tentative title for *Der Schwierige*. See Norton, "Magische Werkstätte," p. 99 (ch. 11, n. 5, above). On the theme of "Absicht," see also Stern, "In illo tempore," p. 117.

15 See Stern, "In illo tempore," p. 119, on Münchhausen's feat.

16 See John J. White, "A Note on the Significance of the Game of Bridge as an Image in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige*," *GL&L*, 19 (1965/6), 198, on the need to realize that "one can only win if one plays the game."

17 See Hans Mayer, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal," in his *Der Repräsentant und der Märtyrer: Konstellationen der Literatur* (Frankfurt/Main, 1971), p. 43, on comedy in "Niemandsland," and Heinz Politzer, "Die letzten Tage der Schwierigen: Hofmannsthal, Karl Kraus und Schnitzler," *Merkur*, 28 (1974), 217–18, on the play as "keine Komödie, sondern ein Mysterium" ending in an *unio mystica*. But I think Mauser, *Konfliktbewältigung*, pp. 152–3, misses a nuance when he emphasizes the lack of a humanly visualizable future for Hans Karl and Helene. Why should they *not* attend soirées in the future? Dorrit Cohn, "The Misanthrope; Molière and Hofmannsthal," *Arcadia*, 3 (1968), 297, points out the parallel *open* endings of *Der Schwierige* and *Le Misanthrope*. To be sure, the situation is complicated. In Chapter 11 I insisted on the atmosphere of disorder and incongruity at the end of *Der Schwierige*. Now I argue that the play has a visionary ending; and I claim there is no inconsistency in what I say. The quality of the marriage as a utopian vision is established precisely by contrast with the non-utopian confusedness in which the fiction culminates. And the function of that utopian vision, as *our* means of maintaining social existence in spite of its "triviality," requires the openness, the sense of continuing social possibilities, at the end of the fiction; otherwise the vision would represent our departure from, or supersedure of, the social – which it does not.

13. Art by accident

1 On *Tasso* and *Der Schwierige*, see ch. 10, n. 11, above. Also, the discussion of Goethe's Prinzessin in the "Unterhaltung" suggests affinities with Helene (P2 194); on the Prinzessin and Maria in *Andreas*, thus perhaps a connection with Helene, see W30 18; E 207.

2 See my "Cinema, Theater and Opera," esp. p. 9, on the divergence of dramatic performances and the corresponding convergence in opera.

3 See Hans Mayer, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Richard Strauss," in his *Ansichten: Zur Literatur der Zeit* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1962), pp. 16–18, which refers to W23 549–50; P4 428–9. Hofmannsthal insists that the language is the soul of the work: "die Figuren, aus dem Element dieser Sprache genommen, nehmen etwas Kaltes an, sie stehen in viel härterer Kontur gegeneinander" (W23 555; P4 430). There are critical hints about the music in H/RS, pp. 112–13, 118, 185–7, and an outright attack in the unsent letter of June 11, 1916 (H/RS, pp. 345–6). See also Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Mein Leben* (Frankfurt/Main, 1963), p. 299, on Hofmannsthal's opinion of Strauss and Lehár; Hofmannsthal is careful (ironic?) in talking about Lehár to Strauss directly (H/RS, pp. 103, 650–1).

4 H/EvB, p. 214, referring to H/HK, pp. 287–8. The unsent letter to Strauss is mentioned in n. 3 above. Compare also the 1920 plan for a periodical "Durchaus entgegen dem Zeitgeist, der negiert wird" (A 367).

5 See Erika Brecht, *Erinnerungen an Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Innsbruck, 1946), pp. 69–70. The only evidence against this account of the rewriting of *Der Turm* is in Hofmannsthal's own utterances, which, given his desperate relation to Reinhardt, are not reliable. See also Georgina A. Clark, "Max Reinhardt and the Genesis of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Der Turm*," *MAL*, 17 (1984), 1–32.

6 By quoting Blake I also acknowledge the intelligence of Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy* (London, 1957), as well as my fundamental disagreement with his assertion that "After 1914, then, Reason and Energy tended to go their separate ways" (p. 232), reason being represented by "critical minds" like Hofmannsthal and Musil. Hamburger is here describing what is really a quality of reception, not of creative temper.

7 Jakob Knaus, *Hofmannsthals Weg zur Oper "Die Frau ohne Schatten": Rücksichten und Einflüsse auf die Musik* (Berlin, New York, 1971). The book's main sections are: " 'Der Rosenkavalier' – Rücksichten auf die Musik," " 'Ariadne auf Naxos' – Einfluß auf die Musik," "[*Die Frau ohne Schatten*] Rücksichten und Einflüsse auf die Musik."

8 See Mayer, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Richard Strauss," and Dieter Borchmeyer, "Der Mythos als Oper – Hofmannsthal und Richard Wagner," in *Forschungen* 7, pp. 19–65 (ch. 4, n. 1, above), who argues, "Nicht zuletzt ist es aber dieses ... Wagnerische Element in

Hofmannsthals Dichtung, das ihn mit Richard Strauss verbunden hat" (p. 65), this Wagnerian element being Hofmannsthal's "Art des dichterischen *Vorwaltens*" (p. 32). But what if Hofmannsthal *had* had a "lighter" collaborator? Borchmeyer's points are colored by the history of reception.

9 See Walther Brecht, p. 319 (ch. 7, n. 17, above), and the letter to Max Pirker (A 369–70).

10 See H/EvB, pp. 64–8, and the plan for educating soldiers at the front described by Heinz Lunzer, *Hofmannsthals politische Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1914–1917* (Frankfurt/Main, 1981), pp. 188–9.

11 Compare Florindo and Ochs on the unattractive lady (L1 39–41, 286; W23 25), or on stags and mountain-cocks (L1 63, 284; W23 24). On "Neuhaus," see Norton, "Magische Werkstätte," p. 100.

12 Borchardt says to Hofmannsthal of *Der Rosenkavalier*, "Sie . . . steckten den Lyriker und sogar den Dichter in die Tasche und begannen mit Ihren Kindern zu spielen, vor Ihren Kindern spielen zu lassen" (H/RB, p. 53).

13 Emil Staiger, "Betrachtungen zum 'Rosenkavalier,'" in his *Musik und Dichtung*, 2nd edn (Zürich, Freiburg i. Br., 1959), pp. 86–7.

14 See P4 441–2, and the letter to Borchardt of August 3, 1912, in Werner Volke (ed.), "Hugo von Hofmannsthal – Rudolf Borchardt: Unbekannte Briefe," *JDSG*, 8 (1964), 24.

15 Form remains form even if we understand that it originates in our cultural tradition or our own manner of perceiving. On the question of the "unity" of *Ariadne*, which arises here, Karen Forsyth, *"Ariadne auf Naxos" by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: Its Genesis and Meaning* (Oxford, 1982), denies "any sort of unity" at all (p. 262) – as if unity were an objectively measurable quality – even while noting that "the aesthetic function strives for unity" (p.263), that our very thinking about the work does give it "unity" after all. More consistent is Matthew Anatole Gurewitsch, "The Maker's and the Beholder's Art: Serendipidity in *Ariadne auf Naxos*," *GR*, 53 (1978), 145, who suggests that *Ariadne* "conceals its own mastery in a way that invites us not to discover the inner coherence of an artifact, but as we witness the two ostensibly unrelated actions to share the sense of possessing the poet's gift of making imaginative patterns ourselves, of forging complementarity where there is only unlikeness." This formulation captures the idea of a contingent art that maneuvers us into the position of understanding *ourselves* as the source of unity.

16 I cannot find this aphorism in Novalis, whom Hofmannsthal cites.

17 See H/RS, pp. 338–40, on the question of how much of Zerbinetta will be seen and heard at the end.

18 See Gurewitsch, "The Maker's and the Beholder's Art", and Barbara Könneker, "Die Funktion des Vorspiels in Hofmannsthals *Ariadne auf Naxos*," *GRM*, N. F. 20 (1972), 125–41, who, rather than simply seeing a lack of "unity," analyzes the structure of the work in terms of a

tension between *interpretation* and its object, and argues that the spectator experiences this tension as a "Klärungsprozeß" (p. 141).

19 See H/RS, p. 178, on a "Ziegenbockmotiv" that was discussed at an early stage, and Forsyth, "Ariadne auf Naxos," p. 86.

20 Nietzsche, *Geburt der Tragödie*, ch. 8, pp. 57–8.

21 We recall the Madman's mirror in *Das Kleine Welttheater*, and the idea of the Greeks' "organizing chaos" in *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil*, p. 329. Nietzsche's theory of drama, and the dialectic of individuality and its opposite, are discussed in *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, pp. 234–46.

14. The allomatic

1 See especially Alewyn on *Andreas*, pp. 14–60. "Allomatic" also occurs in a marginal note in Hofmannsthal's copy of Ferdinand Maack, *Zweimal gestorben! Die Geschichte eines Rosenkreuzers aus dem XVIII. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: W. Heims, 1912). See Manfred Pape, "Aurea Catena Homeri: Die Rosenkreuzer-Quelle der 'Allomatik' in Hofmannsthals *Andreas*," *DVLG*, 49 (1975), 686.

2 See n. 1. Page numbers for Pape and Maack are given in parentheses.

3 David H. Miles, *Hofmannsthal's Novel "Andreas"* (Princeton, 1972), p. 64, after Hofmannsthal, *Selected Prose*, trans. M. Hottinger and T. and J. Stern (New York, 1952), p. 381.

4 Alewyn, "Andreas," p. 158.

5 Euripides, *Bacchae*, 447–8 (see A 100); Plato, *Sophist*, 265C. That Hofmannsthal knew the *Sophist* is probable, though as far as I know not demonstrable. He certainly studied the closely related *Theaetetus*, probably after having his attention drawn to it by Schopenhauer, e.g. *Werke*, II, 107 (cf. *Theaet.* 197C–199C), on the mind as "ein Taubenschlag" (P2 83); and see ch. 5, n. 8, above. Schopenhauer (II, 458) quotes from the *Sophist* itself a passage (258D–E) that must have interested Hofmannsthal, on the nature of the "other."

6 See ch. 9, n. 11, above. I quote from the 2nd edn (London, New York, Toronto, 1930) which differs from the first only in the addition of some appendices. Quotations by page number below.

7 Cf. W30 31, 108, 111; E 201, 202, 203, where Hofmannsthal speaks of the "element" of poetry or of a person in just this sense. We recall also the "social element" in the letter to Wildgans on *Der Schwierige*.

8 See e.g. Heraclitus, frag. 15 (Diels/Kranz).

9 Steiner has "in ihr für ihn" (E 243).

10 "Operieren" is alchemical terminology, the production of the *opus* that is ultimately one's own self. See W30 102 on the alchemical "Ergon."

11 Judith Ryan, "Die 'allomatische Lösung': Gespaltene Persönlichkeit und Konfiguration bei Hugo von Hofmannsthal," *DVLG*, 44 (1970), 190, 207.

12 Ibid. pp. 189–90.

13 According to Ryan, "Die 'allomatische Lösung,'" p. 206, Hans Karl's "Konfrontation mit zwei einander gegenübergestellten Frauen" is the center of the play. Perhaps so, but his "Wiegel-Wagel" is not an *uncertainty* about which woman he prefers.

14 Alewyn, "Andreas," pp. 158, 157.

15. The rôle of "Vorwitz" in *Das Salzburger Große Welttheater*

1 On Hofmannsthal's sacrifice of individuality in this project, see his letter to Nadler of August 4, 1922 (W10 213), quoted from Werner Volke, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Josef Nadler in Briefen," *JDSG*, 18 (1974), 77.

2 Cynthia Walk, *Hofmannsthals* Großes Welttheater: *Drama und Theater* (Heidelberg, 1980), p. 53; see also p. 80. Walk recognizes that Hofmannsthal's relation to Reinhardt was more an "Existenzfrage" (p. 43) than a matter of artistic need or sympathy; but her scholarly impartiality leaves undone what seems to me the critic's duty here, to clear up the "theatrical" *as a concept*. Erken, *Hofmannsthals dramatischer Stil*, pp. 132–8 (ch. 10, n. 9, above), does not fully develop his ideas; but his stance, his avoidance of an easy dismissal of Hofmannsthal as a theatrical thinker, is sounder than Walk's.

3 See W. E. Yates, "Hofmannsthal and Austrian Comic Tradition," *Colloquia Germanica*, 15 (1982), 73–83, who distinguishes between Hofmannsthal's actual achievement and his attempts at self-justification.

4 Neither Brian Coghlan, *Hofmannsthal's Festival Dramas: Jedermann, Das Salzburger Große Welttheater, Der Turm* (Cambridge, Melbourne, 1964), p. 179, nor Arnold Bergstraesser, "The Holy Beggar: Religion and Society in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 'Great World Theatre of Salzburg,'" *GR*, 20 (1945), 264, thinks that Vorwitz is more than a distraction. Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 253, says, "Durch die Figur des Vorwitzes wird die Neugier unbeteiligten Zuschauens ironisiert und damit der Theaterbesucher aus dem bloßen Betrachten herausreflektiert." But "Vorwitz" means more than "Neugier," and the incorporation of the spectator's position into the staged fiction, which aligns the *Welttheater* with *Ariadne*, functions differently in the two works.

5 See Egon Schwarz, *Hofmannsthal und Calderon* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 76ff., who argues that the Faustian is ultimately subordinated to the Calderonian (pp. 86–7). My point is that the two strains, understood respectively as metaphysical and ethical meaning in the *Welttheater*, work together in a needfully negative manner.

6 There are other ways of pairing the characters: e.g. Wisdom/Peasant ("Ist Weisheit nicht in ihm, sie ist in seinem Tun" [W10 26; D3 279]) v. Beauty/King; or Rich Man v. King (*Sein* v. *Schein*); or Peasant v. Rich Man (see Kobel, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 251). But the relations of

the "golden chain" are the central ones, and this symmetrical configuration also recalls *Der Schwierige*, although the center no longer represents the highest. On the complementary relation between the Rich Man and the Beggar, see Schwarz, *Hofmannsthal und Calderon*, p. 80.

7 On Hermetic thought in Hofmannsthal see Swantje Ehlers, "Hermetismus als Kunstverfahren: Formalästhetische Untersuchung zu Hugo von Hofmannsthals 'Märchen der 672. Nacht,'" *Sprachkunst*, 15 (1984), 24–30, and the discussion of alchemical thought in Chapter 14 above. Possible sources, besides the actual Hermetic and alchemical works known to Hofmannsthal, include the cosmogonic speculation in Book 8 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the theory of "das Ur-Eine" in chs. 4–5 of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and Blake via Kassner.

8 Vorwitz was to have been one of a pair of characters, along with a maid named "Einfalt" (W10 130), which suggests "Vorwitz" as the self-complication of the human condition by consciousness.

9 Hofmannsthal did not insist on this very subtle touch in later stage versions of the work. See W10 190.

10 Rudolf Kassner, "William Blake," pp. 43–4 (ch. 1, n. 10, above). Further quotations are located by "Kassner" plus page number.

11 Compare, for example, Los' decision to *use* the Spectre in his labors (*Jerusalem*, plates 7ff.), especially, "His Spectre divides & Los in fury compels it to divide" (plate 17).

12 The name of Wisdom in Calderon is "Discreción," which suggests interlingually the idea of "Diskretion" in *Der Schwierige*, a wisdom that speaks by *not* speaking ("minus dicere").

13 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "De hominis dignitate," in Pico, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari*, ed. E. Garin (Firenze, 1942), p. 106.

16. Salzburg as a theater

1 See Yates, "Hofmannsthal" (ch. 15, n. 3, above).

2 Frederik van Eeden and Volker (= Erich Gutkind), *Welt-Eroberung durch Helden-Liebe* (Berlin, Leipzig, 1911), p. 101. Hamburger, "Bibliothek," pp. 32–4, deals with the influence of this book on the Scandinavian notes and related writings. One parallel he does not mention is the quotation "Welteroberung ist Icheroberung" (P3 367) from van Eeden, *Welt-Eroberung*, p. 97.

3 Ibid. p. 27.

4 The intention of *Der Unbestechliche*, as "das Lustspiel das dem 'Schwierigen' nachfolgen soll" (letter to Helene Burckhardt, *NR*, 70 [1959], 386), is clear. On the plan for yet another comedy that was to be "sehr ernst," see H/CJB, p. 88.

5 Staiger, "Der Schwierige," p. 257 (ch. 10, n. 10, above).

6 Despite the success in Munich, Hofmannsthal was not satisfied with the

reception of *Der Schwierige* (H/RB, pp. 163–4). The comedy was not performed in Vienna until 1924.

7 The earlier works that are now questioned include the works I have classified as "art by accident." See H/RS, pp. 406, 410, on *Ariadne*.

8 See the letter to Bahr of 17 February, 1904 (B2 102), dated by Erken, "Hofmannsthal-Chronik," p. 266, n. 2 (ch. 6, n. 2, above).

9 The parallel here with the relation between the ex-intellectual Chandos and his neighbors is clear. In a later version Hofmannsthal expanded Vorwitz's comment on the Peasant as follows:

Ganz die richtige Mischkulanz hat er troffen, der alte Schlankel: a bisserl an Hochmut und a bisserl a Demut –

und a bisserl a Falschheit
muass a dabei sein! (W10 190)

These lines support my point by suggesting that simplicity, in its effects, is not differentiable from the result of intellectual subtlety. But the revised speech destroys the delicate compactness of the original.

10 Compare Reinhardt's letter of September 2, 1931 to Fürsterzbischof Ignaz Rieder on the manner in which *Jedermann* touches "jeden Zuschauer, den Kompliziertesten und den Primitivsten" in the same manner. The letter is printed in Hofmannsthal, *Jedermann: Das Spiel vom Sterben des reichen Mannes und Max Reinhardts Inszenierungen*, ed. E. Leisler, G. Prossnitz (Frankfurt/Main, 1973), p. 202.

11 Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," plate 11.

12 *El gran teatro del mundo*, lines 1524–32.

13 In 1925 Hofmannsthal still clings to the idea of a new European culture originated by individuals, "die wenigen über die Nationen verstreuten Individuen, welche zählen" (P4 243); and the idea that "der unglückliche Riß in unserem Volk zwischen Gebildeten und Ungebildeten" (P4 391) is what hinders Germany from participating in a general European culture, is also not dropped.

14 Again we think of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and the idea of the symbol (in its very revelation of truth) as protection against the terror of "die wahre Erkenntnis, der Einblick in die grauenhafte Wahrheit" (ch. 7, p. 53).

15 See William H. Rey, "Selbstopfer des Geistes: Fluch und Verheißung in Hofmannsthals 'Der Turm' und Thomas Manns 'Doktor Faustus,'" *Monatshefte*, 52 (1960), 145–57.

16 Böhler's fine account of Hofmannsthal's development must be modified at this point. The catastrophe at the end of the war entails *first* the renunciation of large intellectual syntheses, while precisely the search "nach dem hermeneutischen Kristallisationskern in der sozialen Wirklichkeit" (p. 146; ch. 9, n. 6, above) remains in progress, in *Der Schwierige* and in Salzburg. Then, however, the contradictory quality of this undertaking – the need to accomplish (in the *Welttheater*) what is already recognized (in *Der Schwierige*) as a practical impossibility –

produces what Böhler calls a turn toward the "literary realm," especially in *Der Turm*.

17. Goethe, Nietzsche, Thomas Taylor and *Der Turm*

1 Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Goethe* (München, 1912), pp. 542–55. See H/RS, pp. 212–13.

2 A 206–7. Part of the fragment is there quoted in Greek, though Steiner prints a gamma for the psi in the last word.

3 Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries: A Dissertation*, edited, with introduction, notes, emendations, and glossary, by Alexander Wilder, M.D., 4th edn (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1891). This edition is merely a repagination of the third (1875), with the addition of illustrations by A. L. Rawson, so that for our purposes it makes no difference which of the two Hofmannsthal knew. Mrs. Christiane Zimmer, Hofmannsthal's daughter, in response to my query, was kind enough to inform me that she has no recollection of having delivered the book to her father, as he had suggested in the letter to Helene von Nostitz; and I am indebted to Dr. Rudolf Hirsch for the information that no copy of the book is to be found in what remains of Hofmannsthal's library.

4 In support of his point about the narcissus, Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, pp. 148–9, quotes Claudian, *De raptu Proserpinae*, II, 101–50, esp. 132. More to the point is his quotation (p. 150) of the "Homeric" *Hymn to Demeter*, 425–32; and still more to the point would have been lines 8–9 of the same poem.

5 See Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, pp. 196, 124–5, and the quotation from Vergil, *Aeneid*, VI, 748–51.

6 Taylor often gives Greek texts in garbled form, and sometimes garbles them further in translation, some of which may not be his fault. The present quotation is from Olympiodorus, A 1, 3, in William Norvin (ed.), *Olympiodori philosophi in Platonis Phaedonem commentaria* (Hildesheim, 1968; repr. of 1913), pp. 2–3. Practically all of what Taylor quotes from Olympiodorus can be found in A 1, 3–6, B 127–9; Norvin, pp. 2–4, 111.

7 I include in the references to "Taylor" references to the material contributed by the editor Wilder. See n. 3, above.

8 Schopenhauer, *Werke*, vols. III–IV, pp. 9–26. See also ch. 5, n. 8, above.

9 This is quoted by Wilder from an unsigned article, "The Eleusinia," *Atlantic Monthly*, 4 (1859), 300.

10 Schopenhauer, *Werke*, vols. III–IV, p. 9.

11 Alewyn, *Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, p. 179.

12 Cf. Heraclitus: ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή – frag. 60. Johann Sofer, *Die Welttheater Hofmannsthals und ihre Voraussetzungen bei Heraklit und Calderon* (Wien, 1934), pp. 12–20, has interesting points.

13 On Hofmannsthal's looking for phrases and words when working on *Der Turm*, see Werner Bellmann, "Eine Quelle zu Hofmannsthals 'Großem Welttheater' und zum 'Turm,'" *JFDH* (1984), 289–94.
14 This is an extremely garbled version of the original. See Eduard Hiller (ed.), *Theonis Smyrnaei philosophi platonici expositio rerum mathematicarum ad legendum Platonem utilium* (Leipzig, 1878), pp. 14–15. The repetition of the word "reception," as referring to *epopteia*, is probably a printer's error for "revelation." *Epopteia* is after all a seeing.
15 For the actual sources of detail in Act v, see Erika Brecht, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 70–1 (ch. 13, n. 5, above). I see no reason to be skeptical about Mrs. Brecht's belief that the idea for a gypsy scene was suggested by Ferdinand Ossendowsky, *Tiere, Menschen und Götter* (Frankfurt/Main, 1923).
16 Hofmannsthal says practically this in a note transmitted by Rudolf Hirsch, "Unbekannte Äußerungen Hofmannsthals zum 'Turm,'" *LuK* (1979), 259: "Sigismunds Dasein als fast unbeirrbares, schon bei der dämonischen Geburt beschlossenes Mysterium. Keine Lebenserfahrung und Weltkenntnis, sondern einzig der ursprüngliche *leibschaffende Rhythmus* bestimmt die heldische Gestalt."
17 One of the few critics willing to see a significant theatrical aspect in the 1925 *Turm* is W. G. Sebald, "Das Wort unter der Zunge: Zu Hugo von Hofmannsthals Trauerspiel 'Der Turm,'" *LuK* (1978), 302, who speaks of "Modernität" in "theatralische Technik."
18 van Eeden, *Welt-Eroberung*, p. 25, (ch. 16, n. 2, above).
19 See the interpretation of this play in Chapter 1 of *Modern Drama and German Classicism*.
20 van Eeden, *Welt-Eroberung*, p. 67.

18. A tower in ruins: the tragedy of a tragedy

1 William H. Rey, "Tragik und Verklärung des Geistes in Hofmannsthals 'Der Turm,'" *Euphorion*, 47 (1953), 168. Further quotations are located by page number in parentheses.
2 Coghlan, *Festival Dramas*, p. 295 (ch. 15, n. 4, above).
3 Rey, p. 168. Carl J. Burckhardt, *Erinnerungen an Hofmannsthal* (München, 1964), pp. 36, 39, H/CJB, p. 129.
4 *Erinnerungen*, p. 41. Cf. H/CJB, p. 212.
5 In the first book version, *Der Turm* (München: Bremer Presse, 1925), the second gypsy is eliminated, perhaps as being too obvious a device, but the original intention is clear.
6 Nietzsche, *Geburt*, ch. 7, p. 52.
7 On the dialectical inseparability of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, see my "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth" (ch. 12, n. 13, above).
8 Schopenhauer, *Werke*, vol. 1, p. 36; vol. II, p. 132.
9 So Schopenhauer's Will, in seeking to satisfy itself, always thwarts itself and produces a suffering world: e.g. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, I, §§ 27, 56, 61, 63.

10 *La vida es sueño*, Act I, Scene ii, lines 111–12. These lines are quoted by Schopenhauer, *Werke*, vol. II, p. 400. We also think of Nietzsche's "Nothwendigkeit des Frevels."

11 See Thomas A. Kovach, "Acheronta movebo: A New Light on the Figure of the Physician in Hofmannsthal's *Turm*," in E. Nielsen (ed.), *Focus on Vienna 1900: Change and Continuity in Music, Art and Intellectual History* (München, 1982), p. 81, on Freud as the model for the doctor, and on Freud's having, in Hofmannsthal's view, "overstepped certain boundaries ... revealed secrets which poets have always known to keep hidden." But Hofmannsthal himself now no longer acknowledges a duty to keep truth hidden.

12 This note is dealt with sensitively by R. T. Llewellyn, "Hofmannsthal's Nihilism," *MLR*, 61 (1966), 258.

13 *Geburt*, ch. 19, p. 124; on Kant's "Kritizismus" see also A 47.

14 *Geburt*, ch. 15, p. 95.

15 The belief in intellect's ability to remake the world "ist als Instinct der Wissenschaft beigegeben und führt sie immer und immer wieder zu ihren Grenzen, an denen sie in *Kunst* umschlagen muss: *auf welche es eigentlich, bei diesem Mechanismus, abgesehen ist*" (*Geburt*, ch. 15, p. 95).

16 The commonwealth devastated by God because of its sins is a central image in *Der Turm*, and Babel itself is suggested by the chant (D4 64, etc.) from Jeremiah 51 which refers to its destruction as Babylon.

17 *Geburt*, ch. 15, p. 98.

18 We think not only of Büchner's last words but also of Nietzsche's idea that suffering is a "Talent" (*Geburt*, ch. 3, p. 34). It is significant for the argument below on the propagandistic bias of *Turm 2* that this speech is eliminated in the revision.

19 Hofmannsthal almost certainly quotes this from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, vol. XX (*WA*, XXIX, 177), and so invokes *Egmont* yet again.

20 On the relation between objectivity and community in the theater, see chapter 5 of *Modern Drama and German Classicism*, on *Egmont*.

21 *Jerusalem*, plate 65.

22 The "vision" is "Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation" (P4 390–413), henceforth "the Munich speech."

23 E.g. July 10, 1926, H/CJB, pp. 211–12; June 24 and September 7, 1926, H/LvA, pp. 379–81, 381–2.

24 H/CJB, p. 212. This "July evening" is described by Burckhardt as an August evening in *Erinnerungen*, pp. 40–4.

25 On Reinhardt's influence on *Turm 2*, see ch. 13, n. 5, above.

26 Coghlan, *Festival Dramas*, p. 294. Jens, *Von deutscher Rede*, pp. 165–7 (ch. 7, n. 9, above), disregards the difference between *Turm 1* and *Turm 2*.

27 Karl J. Naef, *Hugo von Hofmannsthals Wesen und Werk* (Zürich, Leipzig, 1938), p. 281. Llewellyn, "Hofmannsthal's Nihilism," pp. 258–9. Among recent critics, Norbert Altenhofer, " 'Wenn die

Zeit uns wird erwecken ...': Hofmannsthals *Turm* als politisches Trauerspiel," in *Forschungen* 7, p. 13 (ch. 4, n. 1, above), still insists that the child-king gives an "ethischer und politischer Sinn" to Sigismund's death in *Turm* 1.

28 Only this argument, I think, actually explains Hofmannsthal's notes from 1927–8 (A 242–3) in which *Der Turm* is characterized as "autobiographical" and related to "das eigentlich Erbarmungslose unserer Wirklichkeit." It also explains Hofmannsthal's idea of his "Doppelleben" (A 244).

29 Hermann Rudolph, *Kulturkritik und konservative Revolution* (Tübingen, 1971), pp. 209–10, 222–4, 271–3.

30 Grete Schaeder, "Hugo von Hofmannsthals Weg zur Tragödie: Die drei Stufen der Turm-Dichtung," *DVLG*, 23 (1949), 349: "Sigismund ... hat doch in der Stille zugenommen an Kraft, die sich um einen unsichtbaren Mittelpunkt sammelt. Durch seine Wortkargheit hindurch fühlt man ein unbeschreibliches Wach- und Angespanntsein."

31 Bernd Peschken, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte von Hofmannsthals *Turm*, mit ideologiekritischer Absicht," *GRM*, N. F. 19 (1969), 173, argues that not only Olivier, but Basilius and Julian as well, show the effects of a shift toward practical politics in *Turm* 2.

32 Schaeder, "Weg zur Tragödie," p. 349. Coghlan disagrees (*Festival Dramas*, p. 288), but without explaining Sigismund's new last words in *Turm* 2.

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